

APPLICATION NO.	P14/V1810/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL
REGISTERED	2 September 2014
PARISH	WANTAGE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Gill Morgan Jenny Hannaby
APPLICANT	Dandara Ltd, Stockham Developments Ltd and Stockham Properties Oxon 2014 Ltd
SITE	Land West of Stockham Farmhouse
PROPOSAL	Development of land for 90 new homes including private and affordable public open space and protection of existing route of Wilts and Berks canal.
AMENDMENTS	15 December 2014
GRID REFERENCE	439012 / 188650
OFFICER	Stuart Walker

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This application seeks full permission for the erection of 90 new dwellings. The application has been submitted to help address the council's current five year land supply shortfall.
- 1.2 This report seeks to assess the planning application details against the national and local planning policy framework where relevant and all other material planning considerations.
- 1.3 The application comes to committee due to a number of objections being received and because Wantage Town Council objects to the proposal.
- 1.4 The application is recommended for approval subject to conditions and legal agreements.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This application seeks full planning permission for a residential development for 90 dwellings. The application follows on from two earlier phases of development at Stockham Farm (see planning history below for further details) and has been submitted to help address the current shortfall in housing land supply.
- 2.2 The application site lies to the north west of Wantage town centre and is 5.4 hectares in area. It is located within the lowland vale landscape area (policy NE9) and is currently designated as an important open gap between Wantage and Grove (policy NE10).
- 2.3 The site, currently fallow agricultural land with a slope south to north, is bounded by the Crown Packaging PLC facility (located to the north) and incorporates part of the historic Wilts and Berks canal route. A public footpath runs to the north of the former route of the canal and land to the north is broadly flat. To the south, lies Stockham Park residential area and to the west is open agricultural land. The earlier phases of residential development recently permitted are located to the north east.
- 2.4 The application comes to committee because the application is a departure from the development plan and a number of objections have been received along with

objections from East Challow Parish Council and Wantage Town Council.

3.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The proposal will provide 90 dwellings and flats with a mix of one, two, three, and four bedroom units, including 36 units of affordable housing (the exact mix is detailed in the design and access statement which can be viewed online). Vehicle access into the site will be provided off Denchworth Road, connecting through the adjacent 200 home scheme. The layout is arranged around one primary route running north east to west within the site with two secondary roads running north and southwards and smaller lanes to serve the edges of the site. A large area of open space is provided to the north of the development, beyond the canal, with secondary informal spaces located in the western part of the site and to the east (which will include an equipped play area).
- 3.2 The scale is largely two storeys with a variety of eaves lines to promote interest within the streetscape. Certain focal locations include taller roofs and eaves, whereas others use one and $\frac{3}{4}$ storey treatments with lowered eaves and ridge lines. Dwellings are predominately semi-detached and detached with a few terraces constructed in a mix of brick with tiled and slate roofs and simple fenestration patterns in a traditional form with gables and pitched roofs. The layout plan has a strong emphasis on the public realm with streets and spaces defined and fronted by buildings and the scheme has been developed with reference to the principles of the council's residential design guide.
- 3.3 The residential development has been informed by the planning permission for 200 houses on the adjoining site to ensure both permeability between the two sites, and protection of the canal route through the site. Each property has allocated parking and bin storage either on or close to the property, along with private amenity space.
- 3.4 The proposal would result in an estimated additional 217 residents (based upon the district-wide average household figure of 2.409). Local facilities to this site lie within 1.2km in Wantage town centre, which is approximately a 15 minute walk. Denchworth Road is also the route of a regular bus service between Wantage, Grove and locations further afield. A site location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.
- 3.5 The plans have been amended to take account of officer comments and extracts from these latest plans are **attached** at appendix 2. A variety of documents, submitted in support of the application, together with all plan drawings are available to view on the council's website.
- 3.6 The applicants have been in discussion with council officers and others to secure onsite facilities such as public open space and affordable housing and to agree levels of financial contribution towards off-site services to mitigate the impact this proposal will have on those services through the increase in population. The following contributions have been requested:

Vale

- Waste bin provision – £15,300
- Art – £27,000
- Street naming – £1,014
- Recreation – £199,431

County

- Transport (Science Vale) – £213,427
- Transport (towards bus services) – £129,600
- Travel Plan monitoring – £1,240
- Education (primary school) – £525,244

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 4 February 2015

- Education (secondary schools + sixth form) – £585,336
- Education (special educational needs schools) – £16,976
- Property (libraries, waste management, museum, adult day care) – £60,652

Parish / Town Council

- Cemetery - £3,000
- Community Bus - £,3,000
- Street pastor - £2,000
- Betjeman Park - £2,000

4.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

4.1 **Wantage Town Council** – objection. A copy of the parish council's comments is **attached** at appendix 3.

4.2 **East Challow Parish Council** – objection. A copy of the parish council's comments is **attached** at appendix 4.

4.3 **Grove Parish Council** – no strong views.

4.4 **Local residents** – A total of 24 representations of objection have been received from local residents. The objections are made on the following grounds:

- Increased pressure on local infrastructure (schools, roads, health centre, town centre, jobs)
- Loss of green space / gap between Wantage and Grove
- Traffic generation
- Inadequate highway network (Denchworth Road and Mably Way)
- Impact on wildlife
- Over development
- Inadequate play space
- Lack of accommodation for the elderly

4.5 **Wantage and Grove Campaign Group** – objection. A copy of their comments is **attached** at appendix 5.

4.6 **County Highways** – no objection, subject to conditions and financial contributions.

4.7 **Landscape Architect** – holding objection to original plans, no objection to amended scheme, subject to conditions.

4.8 **Tree Officer** – holding objection to original plans, no objection to amended scheme, subject to conditions.

4.9 **Countryside Officer** – holding objection to original plans, no objection to amended scheme, subject to conditions.

4.10 **Environment Agency** – no objection.

4.11 **Thames Water** – no objection.

4.12 **Drainage Engineer** – no objection, subject to conditions.

4.13 **Housing Development and Regeneration** – no objection to proposed mix and location of affordable housing.

- 4.14 **Waste Management Team** – no objection. Requires storage areas for wheeled bins per plot to be provided and financial contribution for supply of bins.
- 4.15 **Lesiure Services** – no objection. Maintenance of open space areas should be clarified and secured either by adoption by the parish council or through a management company. Financial contributions required for off site sports provision.
- 4.16 **Natural England** – no objection, standing advice applies in respect of protected species.
- 4.17 **Environmental Health – Protection Team** – no objection, subject to condition.
- 4.18 **Environmental Health – Contaminated Land** – no objection.
- 4.19 **Wilts and Berks Canal Trust** – welcome the protection for the historic route, where we have our own plans in process for restoration. My concerns involve the proposed walkway across the canal linking the south and north sides of the development. A simple flat bridge would be preferable as this would not then involve a causeway across the canal line. However any foot/cycle way built with the proposed development should be of a temporary construction to allow for a bridge to be built in the future and should also have an adequate pipe underneath to allow the flow of water between the disconnected sections.
- 4.20 **County Archaeologist** – no objection, subject to condition.

5.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

5.1 P13/V1826/FUL – Approved (15/01/2015)

Proposed redevelopment of land to allow 90 new homes including private and affordable housing alongside public open space and protection of land for the future re-alignment of the Wilts and Berks Canal.

P12/V1240/FUL - Approved (28/03/2013)

Residential development to provide 200 new homes across private and affordable tenures, with public open space and play space, the protection of the existing route of the Wilts and Berks Canal and the provision of land to allow for a realigned route, onsite car and cycle parking and improvements to site access and egress.

P12/V1250/O - Refused (03/10/2012)

Outline application for erection of a single storey Class D1 child day care centre, with new vehicle access provided off Denchworth Road. New landscaping, play space, pedestrian connections, on-site car and cycle parking and the protection of the existing route of the Wilts and Berks Canal.

6.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

6.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies:**

GS1 - Developments in Existing Settlements

GS2 - Development in the Countryside

DC1 - Design

DC3 - Design against crime

DC4 - Public Art

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling

DC8 - The Provision of Infrastructure and Services
DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses
DC10 - The Effect of Neighbouring or Previous Uses on New Development
H10 - Development in the Five Main Settlements
H13 - Development Elsewhere
H17 - Affordable Housing
H23 - Open Space in New Housing Development
L14 - The Wilts and Berks Canal
NE10 - Urban Fringes and Countryside Gaps
NE9 - The Lowland Vale
TR1 - Wantage relief road scheme

6.2 The emerging Local Plan 2031, Part 1, Core Policies

The draft local plan part 1 is not currently adopted policy and this emerging policy and its supporting text has limited weight as per paragraph 216 of the NPPF. Greater regard therefore is to be given to the NPPF in line with paragraph 14 and where relevant, the saved policies (listed above) within the existing local plan. The following core policies are relevant to this proposal:

1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
3 – Settlement hierarchy
4 – Meeting our housing need
7 – Providing supporting infrastructure and services
15 – Spatial strategy for the South East Vale Sub-Area
17 – Delivery of strategic highway improvements within South East Vale Sub-Area
22 – Housing mix
23 – Housing density
24 – Affordable housing
26 – Accommodating current and future needs of the ageing population
33 – Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility
35 – Promoting public transport, cycling and walking
36 – Electronic communications
37 – Design and local distinctiveness
38 – Design strategies for strategic and major development sites
39 – The historic environment
40 – Sustainable design and construction
41 – Renewable energy
42 – Flood risk
43 – Natural resources
44 – Landscape
45 – Green Infrastructure
46 – Conservation and improvement of biodiversity
47 – Delivery and contingency

6.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

Residential Design Guide – December 2009
Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009
Open space, sport and recreation future provision – July 2008
Affordable Housing – July 2006
Planning and Public Art – July 2006
Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan, April 2012
Design Guide – November 2014 (consultation document)
S106 interim guidance 2014

6.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012

Paragraphs 14 and 49 – presumption in favour of sustainable development

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

Paragraph 47 – five year housing supply requirement

Paragraph 50 – create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities

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

Paragraphs 70 and 73 – plan positively for community facilities, open space and opportunities for sport and recreation

Paragraph 72 – sufficient school places for existing and new communities

Paragraph 99 – Flood risk assessment

Paragraph 109 – contribution to and enhancement of the natural environment

Paragraph 111 – encourage the effective use of land

Paragraph 112 – economic and other benefits of the best and versatile agricultural land

Paragraph 118 – conserve and enhance biodiversity

Paragraphs 120, 123 and 124 – risks from pollution

Paragraph 131 – protection of heritage assets

6.5 **Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) – March 2014**

In particular guidance on:

‘Determining an a planning application’

‘Air Quality’

‘Design’

‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’

‘Noise’

‘Transport assessments in decision taking’

‘Natural environment’

‘Planning obligations’

‘Water supply, waste water and water quality’

‘Use of planning conditions’

7.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 *National advice*

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is clear that councils should grant planning permission where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date. This is unless any adverse impacts would so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole (Para 14 refers).

7.2 It is clear this application is contrary to local plan policies GS2 and H10. However, these policies are considered to be out of date due to the lack of a five-year housing land supply which requires some flexibility when assessing applications that do not accord with local plan policy. Therefore, the council must assess the proposed application on its site-specific merits and whether, under the NPPF, it is a sustainable form of development.

7.3 This assessment needs to balance the desire of the council to assess the scheme through a strategic sites allocation process against the NPPF tests, which primarily relate to location, design, landscape impact, drainage, and highway safety.

7.4 *Use of land*

Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states, “planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.” The site is presently in agricultural use, so it is not brown field land. This green field site lies in the open countryside, albeit on the edge of Wantage. Thus, the development of the site for housing is contrary to Policy

H11. However, as indicated above, this is not a restricting factor given the shortfall in housing land.

7.5 *Sustainability credentials*

The location of the site is considered to be reasonably close to the range of services and facilities available within Wantage. Officers consider, therefore, that the proposed site is a sustainable location for housing development.

7.6 *Access / Highways*

The site would be accessed from Denchworth Road and together with the proposed site road layout this is considered to be acceptable. There is sufficient off street parking to meet the needs of each dwelling within the site along with turning areas.

7.7 Local concern has been expressed that the proposal would cause traffic congestion and existing roads surrounding the site are unsuitable for more traffic. However, there are no objections from the County Engineer on traffic generation or highway safety grounds. The development is therefore acceptable in terms of highways.

7.8 *Visual impact*

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF says that “the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment”. The site is designated under policy NE10 as important open land between Wantage, Grove and East Challow. This policy is fully consistent with the framework and seeks to safeguard the separate identities of these neighbouring settlements and aims to prevent their coalescence. The site if developed would therefore be contrary to policy NE10.

7.9 However, as planning permission has been granted for 290 houses to the north, the application site no longer functions as important open land separating Grove from Wantage and it is considered a refusal based on policy NE10 in this instance would be difficult to defend on appeal, especially when balanced against the current shortfall in housing supply and the presumption in favour of such development within the framework.

7.10 Furthermore, the site is visually contained with the proposal retaining existing vegetation, development is set back and fronts onto boundaries including the more sensitive western boundary allowing for the long term retention and strengthening of boundary vegetation whereby any impact is localised (further details can be found in the applicant’s visual and landscape appraisal). As such any adverse landscape impact would not so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit of the proposed housing development when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole (Paragraph 14).

7.11 The tree officer and landscape officer have raised some minor points in relation to further details being required regarding on site landscaping and footpath design, which can be covered by condition.

7.12 *Design*

The framework is explicit in seeking a high quality outcome for good design in terms of layout and building form as a key aspect of sustainable development. The proposed layout is considered to be acceptable observing many principles of the council’s residential design guide, with active street frontages and good visual linkages. Each dwelling is considered to sit comfortably within its plot and sufficient outdoor amenity space and on-site parking is provided for each. Their design is considered to be high quality, with the use of sympathetic materials, pitched roofs and traditional gables.

- 7.13 Overall, the scheme is considered to be visually acceptable, is not an overdevelopment of the site, and provides sufficient integration linkages with the adjoining residential development. However, to ensure the quality of the development, conditions relating to materials, boundary treatments, and landscaping and tree protection are considered to be necessary.
- 7.14 *Impact on the residential amenity of neighbours*
The proposed residential development would not have any harmful impact on residential amenity. Amenity standards within the council's residential design guide have been observed. However, following comments from environmental health, conditions relating to noise (arising from the adjoining business use) and contaminated land investigation are required. Subject to these, officers consider the proposal is acceptable in amenity terms.
- 7.15 *Drainage and flooding issues*
The site is considered large enough to deal with surface water without causing surface water runoff to the highway or onto neighbouring properties and can be controlled through planning conditions. In respect of foul drainage, the new dwellings will be connected to the main sewer, which is acceptable in principle.
- 7.16 *Affordable housing*
The affordable housing requirement has been confirmed by the applicant to be workable as part of the scheme and the council's housing officer has no objection to the proposal. The mix and location of affordable housing within the development is acceptable. This provision will be secured through a legal agreement should the recommendation of approval be agreed.
- 7.17 *Infrastructure*
Concerns have been raised that existing social and physical infrastructure within the locality could not cope with the proposed increase in population resulting from this proposal. However, contributions (as detailed in section 3) can be secured to offset the impacts arising from the development. The applicant has agreed to the principle of addressing these needs through contributions which can be secured through a section 106 legal agreement and on this basis the county council raises no objection.
- 7.18 *Ecology*
The applicant has provided comprehensive surveys / reports in relation to protected species within the site. The plans have also been amended to ensure habitats are protected. The proposed mitigation measures are considered acceptable and the relevant licence tests are considered to have been met. However, members need to be aware the proposed habitat works will take longer than 12 months. It is therefore suggested that the time limit for implementation is set at two years in this case which will still ensure the quick delivery of the site to address the housing shortfall without harming protected species. Any impact on other wildlife (i.e. that is not protected under EU directives or UK law) is considered acceptable.
- 7.19 *Heritage assets*
The framework requires that account should be taken of the desirability to sustain and enhance heritage assets. The proposal has a direct impact on the setting of the Wilts and Berks Canal route which has previously been identified as being a local heritage asset that needs to be taken into account.
- 7.20 The proposal has sought to address this by preserving the route and allowing a clear and open space separation between the canal and the nearest proposed housing. Similarly access routes are considered to be sensitively located and visual approaches

to the canal area have been provided as part of the negotiation of the scheme to make the most of this heritage asset. Consequently impact on the asset and its significance is acceptable.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 This 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 main town with close availability of services and facilities should be afforded considerable weight. As the proposal would result in a sustainable development in terms of its relationship and proximity to local facilities and services and the planned contribution to enhance these, the principle of the proposal is considered to accord with the framework.

8.2 In site specific terms, the proposal is not considered to be harmful to the landscape character of the area, highway safety, flood risk, protected species or heritage assets and, therefore, given the current housing land shortfall, it complies with the framework.

8.3 In addition, the scheme can be delivered quickly, making a measurable contribution to help address the current housing land shortfall. A condition requiring the commencement of development within two years of the date of the grant of planning permission is recommended and is acceptable to the applicant.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

9.1 **It is recommended to grant planning permission subject to:**

1. Completion of section 106 agreements for:

Vale / Town

- Waste bin provision
- Art
- Street naming
- Recreation
- Affordable housing
- Open space
- Cemetery
- Community Bus
- Street pastor
- Betjeman Park

County

- Transport (Science Vale)
- Transport (public transport)
- Education (primary school)
- Education (secondary schools + sixth form)
- Education (special educational needs schools)
- Property (libraries, waste management, museum, adult day care)

2. The following conditions, including the requirement for the commencement of development within two years from the date of the issue of planning permission to help address the immediate housing land shortfall:

- 1. Time Limit – 2 year commencement date;**
- 2. Approved plans;**
- 3. MC2 - materials (samples);**
- 4. Landscape scheme including hard, soft and details of the proposed play area and associated management plan to be submitted and approved and**

retained for 5 years;

5. Tree protection measures;

6. Woodland management plan to be submitted and approved;

7. Maintenance of open space / play areas to be submitted and approved;

8. Boundaries in accordance with approved plans;

9. Slab levels to be submitted and approved;

10. Development shall not begin until a sustainable water drainage scheme for the site based on the agreed flood risk assessment (FRA) Stuart Michael Associates' Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy of 30 June 2014 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed. The scheme shall include:

- Details of the drainage system outlined within the FRA, particularly the detailed design of the proposed filter drains;

- Details which show that for all events up to and including the 1 in 100 chance of any year critical storm event, including an appropriate allowance for climate change, the site discharge will not exceed 19.92 l/s;

- Details which show that the storage volume required to attenuate surface water run-off from the critical 1 in 100 chance of any year storm event, with an appropriate allowance for climate change, will be provided on site;

11. Development shall not begin until a scheme to dispose of surface water and foul drainage has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The principles of the scheme shall relate to the submitted FRA Stuart Michael Associates' Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy of 30 June 2014. The scheme shall be implemented as approved prior to any occupation of dwellings.

12. Access in accordance with specified plan;

13. Parking in accordance with specified plan;

14. Garage accommodation to be retained;

15. Construction traffic management plan to be submitted and approved;

16. Residential travel plan to be submitted and approved;

17. No development shall take place until details of the provisions to be made for the provision of 10 bat roosting sites have been submitted to and approved by the Council. These shall include at least 6 boxes of a variety of designs erected on retained trees along the Wilts and Berks Canal and on the western periphery of the site and 4 integrated bat boxes incorporated into suitable locations on buildings facing the former Wilts and Berks canal and on the western boundary of the site. The approved works shall be implemented in full before the development is first brought into use, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council.

18. The following works including site clearance, tree works, site access works, or any vegetation clearance shall not in any circumstances commence unless the Local Planning Authority has been provided with either:

a) a licence issued by Natural England pursuant to the Regulation 53 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 authorising the specified activity to go ahead; or

b) a statement in writing from Natural England to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity will require a licence.

19. No development shall commence until the 'Western Newt Habitat Area' which has been agreed as part of the mitigation for application P13/V1826/FUL has been completed.

20. Prior to the occupation of a dwelling, that dwelling shall be insulated against all sources of external noise in accordance with a scheme which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme may require the insulation of the walls and roofs, the fitting of

double-glazed windows, the treatment of site boundaries and the provision of acoustic barriers/bunds.

21. Prior to any demolition and the commencement of the development a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the Local Planning Authority shall prepare an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation, relating to the application site area, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

22. Following the approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in condition 21, and prior to any demolition on the site and the commencement of the development (other than in accordance with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation), a staged programme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation shall be carried out by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation. The programme of work shall include all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

23. Prior to commencement of development, full details of the proposed bridge across the canal shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved bridge shall be constructed prior to occupation of any dwelling in accordance with the approved details and shall be available for use at all times thereafter.

24. The materials to be used, specification to be adopted and the timing of the improvement work to re-surface Public Footpath 196/7 (East Challow) shall all be approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the local highway authority prior to commencement of the work.

25. The materials to be used, specification to be adopted and the timing of the improvement work to widen and improve Public Footpath 391/35 (Wantage) shall all be approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the local highway authority prior to commencement of the work.

26. No materials, plant, temporary structures or excavations of any kind shall be deposited / undertaken on or adjacent to any Public Right of Way that may obstruct or dissuade the public from using the Public Right of Way whilst development takes place.

27. No construction / demolition vehicle access may be taken along or across a Public Right of Way without prior permission and appropriate safety/mitigation measures approved by the Countryside Access Team. Any damage to the surface of the Public Right of Way caused by such use will be the responsibility of the applicants or their contractors to put right / make good to a standard required by the Countryside Access Team.

28. No vehicle access may be taken along or across a Public Right of Way to residential or commercial sites without prior permission and appropriate safety and surfacing measures approved by the Countryside Access Team. Any damage to the surface of the Public Right of Way caused by such use will be the responsibility of the applicants, their contractors, or the occupier to put right / make good to a standard required by the Countryside Access Team.

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