

**CUM/1079/3 – Cala Homes (Mids) Ltd & Prof P Jeffreys and Mrs L Jeffreys
Erection of 9 apartments with associated garaging and parking (re-submission). 7 Dean Court
Road, Cumnor Hill, Oxford**

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a three storey building comprising 9 x 2 bed flats (2 flats also have a separate study) with associated parking (18 spaces). It is a resubmission of a scheme that was withdrawn in May 2006 that has been amended to take account of comments made by the Architects Panel and the Consultant Architect.
- 1.2 The property is currently a large detached dwelling sited within a large plot located on the south west side of Dean Court Road. It is bounded by similar dwellings to the northwest (no. 11) and southeast (no. 3). To the rear lies a small copse of trees beyond which lies no. 9 Dean Court Road.
- 1.3 The proposed building has been designed to look like a large dwelling, in an Arts and Crafts style. The key amendments to the building can be summarised as follows:
- 1.4 The front elevation has been modified to reduce the length of the principal ridge by reducing the eaves of the west elevation, which also achieves a lowering of the central ridge. A centrally placed chimney has been added to lessen the impact of the roof length and improve the domestic character of the design. The front and west facing side elevations now have a lower eaves level, with exposed rafter feet to add interest to these facades. The bays on the front elevation have also been modified, in particular reducing the width and height of the right hand side bay and improving the proportions of both bays. Glazing bars have been added to both bays to create more detail and interest. More prominence has also been given to the stone entrance porch by arching and enlarging it, and an arched lintel has been introduced over the vehicle entrance. Side facing dormer windows have also been omitted and replaced with roof lights.
- 1.5 A copy of the plans showing the location of the revised proposal, its design and layout are attached at **Appendix 1**. A copy of the elevation drawings of the withdrawn scheme and the original design statement are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.6 The application comes to Committee because several letters of objection have been received and the views of Cumnor Parish Council differ from the recommendation.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 Planning permission was granted in 1975 for a ground floor extension to the existing property. It was further extended in 1995 when planning permission was granted for a first floor extension.
- 2.2 A proposal to demolish the existing dwelling and erect a building of 9 flats was withdrawn in May 2006.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011*
Policy GS5 (making efficient use of land and buildings) seeks to promote the efficient re-use of previously developed / unused land and buildings within settlements (provided there is no conflict with other policies in the Local Plan).
- 3.2 Policy H10 (development in the five main settlements) enables new housing development within the built-up areas of Cumnor Hill, provided it makes efficient use of land, the layout,

mass and design of the dwellings would not harm the character of the area and it does not involve the loss of facilities important to the local community (i.e. informal public open space).

- 3.3 Policy H15 (housing densities) seeks net residential densities of at least 40 dwellings per hectare, provided there would be no harm to the character of the surrounding area or the amenities of adjoining properties.
- 3.4 Policies DC1, DC5, DC6, and DC9 (quality of new development) are relevant and seek to ensure that all new development is of a high standard of design / landscaping, does not cause harm to the amenity of neighbours, and is acceptable in terms of highway safety.
- 3.5 PPG3, "Housing", is also relevant and explains the presumption in favour of developing previously developed sites within urban areas for housing ahead of green field sites and making the most efficient use of land.

4.0 **Consultations**

- 4.1 Cumnor Parish Council has objected to the application and their comments are attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 County Engineer – no objections (subject to conditions).
- 4.3 Drainage Engineer – no objections (subject to conditions).
- 4.4 Arboricultural Officer – the trees that are to be lost are not particularly significant and are not worthy of a TPO. However tree protection measures during construction will be required for the trees on the perimeter of the site which are important and should be retained.
- 4.5 Environmental Health – No objections.
- 4.6 Consultant Architect – comments attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 4.7 9 letters of objection have been received, which are summarised as follows:
- The development will create a precedent, making it impossible in future to resist similar unsuitable developments.
 - Flats are inconsistent with the character of the area. The proposal undermines the established family home character of the area and is inappropriate here.
 - The scheme is no different to the previous withdrawn one. Little has changed.
 - The proposed block of flats, with its large footprint, substantial bulk and large expanse of car parking is over-dominant and would harm the character of the area. It certainly does not enhance it.
 - The proposal will result in the destruction of a perfectly good dwelling.
 - 9 dwellings will increase the traffic in both Dean Court Road and onto the Cumnor Hill, the junction of which is not designed for such traffic flows. Dean Court Road is also unsuitable for such an increase in traffic. It is narrow and is frequently used as a pedestrian route by children at the Matthews Arnold School in Arnold's Way.
 - A two storey building with rooms in the roof is inappropriate to the area.
 - Site lies outside area designated under policy H10.
 - The creation of parking spaces to the rear is inappropriate and will lead to a lot of manoeuvring and noise generation. The drive-through archway will also amplify engine noise to the detriment of neighbouring properties. Parking should be confined to the front only to protect neighbouring amenity.
 - Number of flats should be reduced to 6 as a maximum.
 - Garage building at the front is inappropriate.
 - The number of trees that would be lost on site is "outrageous", and will lead to an urbanisation of the locality.

- Upper floor windows will overlook neighbouring properties leading to a loss of privacy.
- There is no public sewer available in Dean Court Road. Any new sewer should not affect existing arrangements.
- 9 dwellings will result in at least 18 bags of waste being left for collection and are likely to be vulnerable to local wildlife. The chances of tidy and responsible management from all occupants of 9 dwellings will be extremely low.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 The main issues in this case are considered to be 1) the principle of the development in this location, 2) the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including its design and its impact on existing trees, 3) the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, 4) the safety of the access and parking arrangements, and 5) precedent.
- 5.2 On the first issue, the principle of replacing a dwelling with flats, Members may recall a recent proposal at 10 Cumnor Hill, which was similar to the current proposal, of replacing a house with a building containing flats. That scheme has been built and is considered to fit in well with the character of the area. Members will also recall the recent appeal decision at 116 Oxford Road, Abingdon for a very similar redevelopment scheme for flats, which was allowed. Latest Government advice in PPG3, 'Housing', encourages the use of innovative approaches to achieve higher densities within existing settlements. The principle of a development of flats is therefore considered acceptable. The proposed residential units are considered to be an appropriate form of development in this area and would provide small units to meet the needs of an increasing number of one and two person households. The proposed density represents 46 dwellings per hectare, which is in accordance with Policy H15.
- 5.3 Regarding the second issue, the design of the proposal, it is acknowledged that the new building is larger than other neighbouring properties in Dean Court Road in terms of bulk and massing. However, it is not considered to be out of keeping with the locality or an overdevelopment of the site.
- 5.4 The design takes reference from the Arts and Crafts movement, and has the appearance of a large house. The design has been the subject of considerable discussion between the applicants and Officers, and has been amended twice since the original scheme was submitted. The scheme the subject of this application has more variety and articulation in its form, which helps to break up the mass of the building, and is of similar height to the existing houses on either side, taking account of the sloping nature of Dean Court Road. It is also sited centrally within the site and so will not be overly prominent in the street scene. Officers consider the design to be acceptable. Furthermore, the Consultant Architect has commented that there would be no justification for a design based refusal.
- 5.5 There would be some 400sqm of rear garden space for use by occupants, which amounts to 20sqm per bedroom (including the two study rooms in flats 1 and 9). This is well in excess of the Council's standard of amenity space for flats, which is 15sqm per bedroom. Officers, therefore, consider that the proposal is not an overdevelopment of the site. Furthermore the loss of specified trees is not considered to be so harmful to the locality to warrant refusal. The Arboricultural Officer has subsequently raised no objections.
- 5.6 Turning to the third issue, the impact on neighbouring properties, it is considered that no harm is caused to the immediate neighbours. The proposed building is not on the common boundaries and is no longer in depth to the rear than the existing dwellings on either side. The upper storey elements have been designed so as to avoid any harmful impact. Any impact on light or privacy is not considered to be sufficiently harmful to warrant refusal, particularly given the difference of levels relative to the immediate neighbours.
- 5.7 On the issue of parking and access, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable. The parking provision shown of 18 spaces is considered to be sufficient in this location. Furthermore, the County Engineer has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions.

- 5.8 With regard to precedent, whilst this can be material where other sites suitable for similar development can be identified in the locality, Members will be aware that each proposal must be considered on its own merits. In this case, there are other potential sites in the vicinity that could be the subject of a similar proposal. However, given the thrust of Government guidance on new housing, particularly in terms of making more efficient use of land within settlements, Officers consider that the issue of precedent is not such as to warrant refusal of this individual proposal.
- 5.9 Of the other objections made, the garage building to the front is not considered to be out of keeping in this location. It is set back from the front boundary, is of a simple design with a hipped roof and has a ridge height of 4.8m. It will also largely be screened by existing vegetation along the front boundary.
- 5.10 The proposed bin store will enable waste to be stored in a secure manner so as not create a nuisance to other occupiers and highway users of Dean Court Road.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
2. *MC2 – Sample materials*
3. *HY3 – Access in accordance with specified plan*
4. *HY25 – Car parking layout (Building)*
5. *HY29 – Surface water*
6. *HY10 – Specified visibility splays*
7. *LS4 – Landscaping scheme (incorporating existing trees) to be submitted*
8. *RE8 – Submission of drainage details*
9. *RE14 – Garage accommodation to be retained*
10. *CN8 – Submission of full details of rooflights, (including height above floor level and overall style and size)*
11. *Full details of bin storage and cycle parking to be submitted prior to first occupation.*
12. *LS5 – Hand excavation of root areas*
13. *LS9 – Retention of existing trees / hedges*
14. *LS11 – Protection of trees / hedges during building operations*