

## **NHI/3993/1 - Windrush Homes**

### **Demolition of existing house. Construction of 6 x 2-bedroom flats and 3 x 1-bedroom flats.**

**7 Eynsham Road, Dean Court.**

#### **1.0 The Proposal**

- 1.1 The application site is a two storey house that lies close to the junction of Cumnor Hill and Eynsham Road. A location plan is in **Appendix 1**. The plot fronts both Eynsham Road and Cumnor Hill. To the east is a detached house, No 4 Cumnor Hill. To the west is a detached house used as a guest house, No 6 Cumnor Hill and its garden, and No 9 Eynsham Road. There are complex level changes in this area, with land rising up from Eynsham Road to Cumnor Hill, and also rising up Cumnor Hill. The existing house on the site and the neighbouring houses are set at different levels to each other.
- 1.2 The proposal is to demolish the house and attached garage and replace it with a building containing a total of 9 flats. The proposed building has been designed to achieve the appearance when viewed from Eynsham Road of two linked houses with an attached car port for 3 cars. There would be a one-and-a-half storey and single-storey element projecting from the rear of the building. The existing vehicular access would be used to serve the new development. A total of 13 car parking spaces are proposed, which equates to 1 space for each 1-bedroom flat and 1.5 spaces for each 2-bedroom flat together with some shrub planting to provide screening for the parked cars. Some of the parking would also be out of general view inside the proposed car port.
- 1.3 The existing house is set above the level of Eynsham Road, and the rear garden rises up towards Cumnor Hill. The entire new building will be set down at the level of Eynsham Road and much of it will be sunk down below the level of the adjoining gardens of Nos 4 and 6 Cumnor Hill. A retaining wall is proposed in the rear garden of the site to enable much of the garden to remain at its existing level, with steps down to the proposed building.
- 1.4 The issue of the relative levels of the proposed and existing buildings and gardens is complex and is illustrated in the application drawings in **Appendix 2**.
- 1.5 This application comes to Committee because of the objections of North Hinksey Parish Council and local residents.

#### **2.0 Planning History**

- 2.1 None.

#### **3.0 Planning Policies**

- 3.1 Policy H10 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 allows for new housing development in the built up area of Botley (which includes Dean Court) provided it would not result in the loss of an important facility, makes efficient use of land, and does not harm the character of the area. Policies DC1, DC5 and DC9 seek to ensure that all new development is acceptable in terms of design, impact on neighbours and highway safety.

#### **4.0 Consultations**

- 4.1 North Hinksey Parish Council - object for the reasons in **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 Local Residents - 4 letters of objection have been received and a petition signed by 7 residents. The grounds of objection are as follows:-
- i) loss of trees that contribute to the character of the area
  - ii) height of proposed buildings

- iii) another example of town cramming / out of keeping with the character of the area
- iv) loss of privacy / overlooking
- v) additional drainage problems in the area
- vi) additional traffic congestion
- vii) general noise and disturbance
- viii) poor access to some of the flats / poor amenity for occupiers
- ix) overshadowing
- x) instability from excavation works
- xi) noise and disturbance during construction
- xii) water run-off from parking area may cause flooding

4.3 County Engineer - no objection subject to conditions.

4.4 Thames Water - no objection subject to no drainage of surface water into the existing foul sewer.

4.5 Council's Arboricultural Officer - no objections subject to conditions.

#### 5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 There are four issues for Members to consider - first, the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; second, the amenities of future occupants and the question of potential overdevelopment of the site; third, the impact of the proposal on neighbours; and fourth, the implications for highway safety. With regard to the first issue, the intention of the proposed design is to have the appearance of two linked houses when viewed from Eynsham Road and Cumnor Hill. Each "house" would have different materials and there would be a clear break in the wall and roof line to emphasise the distinction. The submitted street elevation shows that the scale of the proposed buildings would accord with the general scale of surrounding dwellings. The span of the building would be relatively narrow at 6 - 7 metres. Officers consider this approach to the design of the buildings has been successful. Given that the new building would be set 4 metres from the side wall of No 4 Cumnor Hill and 13 metres from No 9 Eynsham Road, it is considered that sufficient space would exist around the proposed building when viewed from public areas to accord with the character of the area.

5.2 Concern has been expressed regarding the relationship of the rear projecting element to the main building. However, due to the proposed lowering of site levels and the presence of a 2 metre high fence on the boundary of the site with Cumnor Hill, the rear projection is unlikely to be visible from public views from Cumnor Hill.

5.3 The applicants wish to retain existing semi-mature trees in the front garden and some shrub planting to help soften the visual appearance of the proposed car parking. This element of the proposal has been discussed with the Council's Arboricultural Officer, who is satisfied that, subject to the use of geo-textile under the canopies, and the protection of the trees during construction (both of which can be controlled by condition), the proposed parking should not harm the existing trees. A 1.5 metre high stone wall is proposed on the front boundary. Given the partial screening provided by the proposed walling and planting at the front of the site and, further within, the screening provided by the car port and the actual shape of the site, Officers consider the parking area will not appear dominant from the public highway and would not harm the character of the area.

5.4 Neighbours are concerned about the loss of trees. The applicant has discussed and agreed the general treatment of the site with the Arboricultural Officer. It is proposed to remove a row of large conifers from the west boundary but retain selected deciduous trees in the rear part of the site. The Arboricultural Officer has no objection to any of these works. The impact on the wider area as a result of these works to trees is not considered harmful.

5.5 The second issue is the amenities of future residents and the question of potential overdevelopment. Concern has been expressed regarding the fact that some of the proposed flats will be accessed from the side or rear of the proposed building. Officers do not consider

this to be particularly unusual or unacceptable for occupants of such developments, but it does raise the issue of external lighting which needs to be controlled by condition to minimise potential light pollution. In terms of amenity space, the proposal has over 300 sq.m of rear garden, or more than 20 sq.m per bedroom. This exceeds the Council's standard for flats of 15 sq.m per bedroom and indicates that there is more than adequate amenity space for residents. In light of this, Officers do not consider the proposal represents overdevelopment of the site.

- 5.6 The next issue is the impact on neighbours, principally those at Nos 4 and 6 Cumnor Hill and No 9 Eynsham Road. No 4 Cumnor Hill is a detached house that is set above the level of Eynsham Road. There are no windows in the side elevation facing the application site. The front and side of the proposed building will lie on similar lines to the existing house. The existing flat-roofed garage building in front of the current house is linked to the house by a canopy and has a parapet wall approximately 3 metres high on the boundary with No 4. This garage will be replaced by a pitched roof car port with a studio flat in the roof space, set 1 metre off the boundary. The eaves height of the new car port would be similar to the top of the parapet on the existing garage. The roof above the wall would slope away from the boundary and the windows in the roof would be set at high level. As there are no windows in the side wall of No 4, and as the nearest windows on the front elevation are some 7 metres from the proposed car port, the impact of the proposed dwelling and car port structure on the outlook and amenity of No 4 is considered acceptable.
- 5.7 The mass of the main building would be in a similar position to the existing house. The east wall of the proposed rear projection will face the rear garden of No 4, but at a distance of at least 10 metres. There are two first floor windows shown in this elevation, but they are designed to be high level to prevent overlooking of No 4. The height of the proposal relative to the garden of No 4 will be reduced by lowering the site levels. Officers consider that the height and distance of the proposed building relative to No 4 means the effect on this property is acceptable. There would be no physical dominance and any loss of sunlight would be restricted to part of the day only and, consequently, would not be harmful.
- 5.8 No 9 Eynsham Road has its front garden next to the application site. The more sensitive back garden is separated from the site by the rear garden of No 6 Cumnor Hill and, as a result, should not be harmed by the proposal.
- 5.9 The west flank wall and rear projection of the proposed building would lie next to the rear garden of No 6 Cumnor Hill. The removal of the existing conifer hedge on this boundary will open views of the proposed building from No 6. However, it is again significant that the proposed building and the rear projection will be lower in the ground due to the effective lowering of levels towards Cumnor Hill. The submitted section drawing shows that, for the single storey element of the projection, only the roof is likely to be seen from the garden of No 6 above a boundary fence. Windows in the roof of the proposed building will be set at high level to avoid overlooking.
- 5.10 The physical effect of the proposal on No 6, particularly the rear projection, needs to be carefully considered. Taking into account the large size of the rear garden of No 6 (some 35 m long by 15 m wide on average), the location of the house (towards the west side of the plot), and the difference in proposed levels, Officers consider the impact of the proposed building on the garden of No 6, and on the outlook from the house itself, will be acceptable.
- 5.11 Another issue for neighbours is drainage. There have been significant problems with flooding in Dean Court caused by overloading of the combined surface water and foul drain during heavy rains. Thames Water is aware of this problem but has no objections to this proposal provided the surface water from the development is not connected to the foul drain. This can be secured by condition.
- 5.12 The final issue is highway safety. In front of the site is a pavement and verge, which means that vision along Eynsham Road can be obtained by drivers of vehicles between the site boundary and road. The County Engineer is satisfied with the vision that is available from the access and the impact of the proposal on the local road network. The level of parking (1 space per 1-

bedroom flat and 1.5 spaces per 2-bedroom flat, with 1 extra space) is also considered acceptable given the sustainability of the location. Cycle storage is shown as part of the application.

5.13 Of the other objections raised, the question of noise and disturbance during construction and instability from altering levels are not material to the application. There is no reason to assume that noise and disturbance from future occupants of the development will be more than could be reasonably expected in a residential area. Surface water run-off from the parking area will be dealt with by a condition on highway drainage.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

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

1. *TL1 Time Limit - Full Application*
2. *MC2 Submission of Materials (Samples)*
3. *RE7 Submission of Boundary Details*
4. *RE14 Garage Accommodation*
5. *RE9 Submission of Drainage Details (Surface Water)*
6. *RE21 Floor/Slab Levels (Single Dwelling)*
7. *CN8 Submission of Full Details – retaining walls*
8. *No external lighting shall be installed on the building other than in accordance with details that shall have been first submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority.*
9. *HY3 Access in accordance with Specified Plan*
10. *HY16 Turning space in accordance with Specified Plan*
11. *HY24 Car Park Layout (Dwelling)*
12. *HY29 No Surface Water Drainage to Highway*
13. *LS4 Implementation of Landscaping Scheme (incorporating existing tree(s)) - to be submitted*
14. *LS11 Protection of Trees/Hedges during Building Operations*
15. *LS8 Submission of Details of Development – parking under trees*
16. *Prior to the commencement of development, details of a secure covered cycle store shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority. The cycle store shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development.*
17. *Prior to the commencement of development, details of bin storage shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority. The bin store shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development.*