

**ABG/19731 – Vale of White Horse District Council
Re-development of car park for residential use.
Cattle Market Car Park, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE.**

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application is in outline with all matters reserved, and seeks permission to re-develop the Cattle Market car park for housing. The Cattle Market car park lies next to the Council offices at Abbey House. It operates as a short-stay car park for up to 70 vehicles with parking allowed up to 2 hours. The site is 0.2 hectare in area and is shown in **Appendix 1**. The south boundary of the site is the boundary of the Conservation Area and of Abbey Gardens. To the east are three storey houses in Burgess Close and to the north the Waitrose car park.
- 1.2 The application comes to Committee because the applicant is the Council and because Abingdon Town Council has objected to the application.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 None

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 Policy TR6 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 is directly relevant to this application. This policy states that, within Abingdon and other town centres, loss of public car parking, particularly for short-stays, will not be permitted if it would adversely affect the vitality and viability of the centre. Policy DC5 requires all development to be acceptable in terms of highway safety, while Policy DC8 requires that, if necessary, financial contributions are secured to ensure there is adequate infrastructure and services for all new development. Policy H15 states that, on sites close to the centre of Abingdon, net residential densities of at least 50 dwellings per hectare should be achieved, provided there is no harm to the area or to adjoining residents. Policy H17 requires 40% of new housing to be affordable on sites of more than 0.5 hectare in area.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 Abingdon Town Council objects to the application. “Contrary to Policy TR6 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. If the District Council is minded to approve the application could a certain area be retained for disabled parking?”
- 4.2 Local Residents – 5 letters of objection have been submitted. The grounds of objection can be summarised as follows.
- i) the car park is not surplus and should be retained, particularly for visitors to Abbey Meadow and the outdoor swimming pool and to support town centre shops
 - ii) the existing right of way to Abbey Meadow will be compromised
 - iii) the setting of Abbey Gardens and the Conservation Area will be harmed
 - iv) there is insufficient detail to determine impact and make a decision
 - v) future residents will suffer from noise and disturbance
 - vi) loss of disabled parking next to Abbey Gardens
- 4.3 County Engineer – no objection subject to conditions.
- 4.4 Environment Agency – no objection subject to conditions.

5.0 Officer Comments

- 5.1 This application is concerned with the principle of housing development on the site. There are no details of the type or layout of the proposed housing because these would be considered

as part of a future reserved matters application. An identical approach was taken to the development of Burgess Close, the housing development next to the application site. In that case an outline planning permission was granted for the principle of housing development, followed by a reserved matters application for the detail and layout of the houses.

- 5.2 As the site area is less than 0.5 hectare, affordable housing is not required. To achieve a density of 50 dwellings per hectare, in accordance with Policy H15, the site would be developed with 10 dwellings. Officers consider this figure represents a reasonable estimate for the capacity of the site.
- 5.3 For this outline application there are four main issues for Members to consider. The first of these is the loss of the existing public car park, the second is access, including pedestrian access to Abbey Gardens, the third is flooding, and the fourth is the impact on local services and infrastructure.
- 5.4 Regarding the first issue, Cattle Market car park is one of two short-stay car parks in Abingdon (the other being Civic) with a waiting limit of 2 hours. All the other car parks in the town centre have unlimited stay periods. Under the permit scheme Council staff were prohibited from parking in Cattle Market car park in 2005 and Officers have since monitored the usage of all Abingdon's car parks by the public. The total number of Council controlled parking spaces in and around Abingdon town centre is 1,044. Surveys carried out in 2006 show that the usage of Cattle Market has been generally very low and, even allowing for an increase in overall usage in response to factors such as stronger enforcement of on-street parking controls and an increasing population in Abingdon, it is projected that there will be a surplus capacity in parking of 120 spaces. From this, Officers conclude that the loss of the 70 spaces at Cattle Market car park should not adversely affect the vitality or viability of the town centre as there would still be a surplus of 50 spaces above projected requirements. It should also be remembered that the Waitrose car park is free for short term parking of up to 1½ hours.
- 5.5 There is currently 1 disabled parking space in Cattle Market which would be lost. However, as there are currently 6 disabled parking spaces nearby in Civic car park, the loss of this space is not considered critical. Nevertheless, if Members wish to see this space retained the provision of a disabled parking space in any future development can be secured by condition.
- 5.6 The second issue is access. The existing vehicular access is from Abbey Close. Assuming a density of 50 dwellings per hectare, in accordance with Policy H15, the 0.2 hectare site can be reasonably expected to accommodate 10 dwellings. According to national traffic data, this number of dwellings would generate between 60 and 80 vehicle movements per day. Given the existing car park has a capacity of 70 vehicles, it is considered the existing access is perfectly adequate to cater for a suitable level of housing development on the site. The County Engineer raises no objection.
- 5.7 There is an existing pedestrian access from Cattle Market to Abbey Gardens. This access would be retained and there is no reason to assume that access to Abbey Gardens would be prevented by development of the site. The retention of the access can be secured via condition.
- 5.8 The next issue is flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared for the site and submitted to the Environment Agency. This FRA shows that the site is outside the 1 in 100 year flood plain of the Thames but it does lie within the currently modelled flood plain of the Stert. However, this model does not take account of the fact that the Stert is culverted from Withington Court to the Thames, which is likely to reduce the area of the flood plain in the vicinity of the site. Re-modelling of the Stert flood plain is currently being carried out by the Environment Agency and it is expected this work should be completed by Spring 2007, after which a further FRA can be carried out. The Environment Agency does not object subject to a further FRA being undertaken when the Stert re-modelling has taken place. Officers consider this matter is best addressed through delegation of the application to the Deputy Director (Planning & Community Strategy) in consultation with the Chair.

5.9 The final issue is impact on infrastructure and services. Oxfordshire County Council has requested a pro-rata financial contribution towards impact on schools, the library, waste management, the County museum resource centre and social and health care. These can be secured via a Section 106 Obligation.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *It is recommended that authority to grant planning permission is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning & Community Strategy) in consultation with the Chair subject to:-*

- i) the completion of a revised Flood Risk Assessment upon remodelling of the Stert flood plain and to there being no objections raised by the Environment Agency to this revised FRA*
- ii) a Section 106 Obligation to secure financial contributions towards local infrastructure and service provision*
- iii) conditions, to include access and the retention of a pedestrian access to Abbey Gardens*