

## **ABG/10456/5 – Cranbourne Homes Ltd**

**Demolition of existing buildings. Erection of 2 buildings containing 14 x 1 bedroom flats with associated access, amenity space, car parking and landscaping. Ambulance Station, Springfield Drive, Abingdon, Oxon.**

### **1.0 The Proposal**

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing Ambulance Station and the redevelopment of the site for 14 one bedroom flats with associated parking and amenity space.
- 1.2 The proposal is to build 2 blocks, one housing 10 units fronting onto Thornhill Walk and the other housing 4 unit fronting onto Springfield Drive. The flats are arranged around central entrances and stairs with each entrance giving access to 2 units per floor, and 1 unit at the second floor level in the larger block. The plans show car parking for the flats is to be provided to the rear (west side) of the site, which will be accessed off Springfield Drive. The existing seven spaces in the lay-by along Thornhill Walk are to be retained.
- 1.3 The proposed buildings are of a contemporary design, using modern materials and incorporating flat roofed dormers, cedar clad balconies, rendered panels and cedar boarding.
- 1.4 A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, its design and layout together with extracts from the design statement are attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.5 The application comes to Committee because a number of objection letters have been received.

### **2.0 Planning History**

- 2.1 In August 1988, applications under Circular 18/84 were considered for the erection of four staff flats and a two storey extension to the Ambulance Station. The Council raised no objections.
- 2.2 In February 2005, outline planning permission for 10 x 1 bed flats was approved. A revised scheme for the same development was approved in August 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 area of Abingdon, 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 in the five main settlements, 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, DC8, DC9 and DC14 (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; suitable social and physical infrastructure exists for the development or can be provided; the development is acceptable in terms of highway safety, and will not result in adverse surface water run-off.

3.5 PPS3, "Housing", is also relevant and reiterates the key objective of developing previously developed sites within urban areas, where suitable, ahead of greenfield sites and making the most effective and efficient use of land. It also comments on the importance of design, in that proposed development should complement the neighbouring buildings and the local area in general in terms of scale, density, layout and access. Paragraph 12 of PPS3 confirms that good design is fundamental to the development of high quality new housing, whilst Paragraph 13 goes on to state that design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.

#### 4.0 **Consultations**

4.1 Abingdon Town Council has no objections to the proposal.

4.2 Councillor Monica Lovatt has raised concerns with this proposal. Her comments are attached at **Appendix 2**.

4.3 County Engineer – no objections, subject to conditions and a financial contribution towards the Abingdon Integrated Transport Strategy.

4.4 County Funding Officer – seeks contributions to education / library / fire and rescue provision and waste management operations.

4.5 Drainage Engineer – no objections (subject to conditions).

4.6 Environmental Health – no objections (subject to contaminated land condition).

4.7 Consultant Architect – comments attached at **Appendix 3**.

4.8 Architects Panel – "Welcome step change & good design".

4.9 7 letters of objection have been received, which are summarised as follows:

- The modern design is out of keeping with and is not sympathetic to the surrounding 1950s houses.
- The existing site has an expanse of open ground at the corner of Thornhill Walk / Springfield Drive which affords a clear view across the bend in the road and into the adjoining industrial estate. Developing close to the road will compromise these views to the detriment of highway safety.
- The open ground is used as an informal play space and for informal parking. This will be lost leading to further on-street parking and nowhere for the children to play.
- The block fronting onto Springfield Drive will overlook nos. 65 and 67 Springfield Drive.
- The development will cause extra traffic to the detriment of road users, many of whom are children walking to the local schools.

#### 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, 3) the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, 4) the safety of the access and parking arrangements.

5.2 On the first issue, planning permission has already been granted for 2 buildings in a similar form on this site, to comprise of 10 units. PPS 3 'Housing' makes it a priority to use previously developed land for new housing and encourages the use of innovative approaches to achieve higher densities within existing settlements. In this respect, paragraphs 9 and 10 of PPS3 specifically refer to the Government's strategic housing policy goal to create sustainable, inclusive, and mixed communities in all areas, with the planning system delivering a mix of

housing to support a wide variety of households at a sufficient quantity to take account of need and demand and to seek to improve choice. The principle of a development of 14 flats in the manner proposed is therefore considered an acceptable and appropriate form of development in this location.

- 5.3 Regarding the second issue, the development in the form proposed is not considered to be harmful to the character of the locality. The design is unashamedly modern, with the use of rendered panels, balconies and cedar boarding. The design is clearly different to the more traditional housing found in this part of Abingdon but this, in itself, does not make the proposal harmful. Officers consider the contemporary design to be wholly acceptable. Furthermore, the Consultant Architect has commented that the design is one which is capable of enhancing the character of the area. The Architects Panel also positively endorses the scheme, stating that it is a good design and a welcome step change. Your Officers consider, therefore, that there would be no justification for a design based refusal.
- 5.4 The scheme has a density in excess of 40 dwellings per hectare, which accords with Policy H15. There is on site communal garden space for use by occupants of the flats, in addition to private balconies on the main building, as well as other open public space nearby. Officers, therefore, consider that the proposal is not an overdevelopment of the site.
- 5.5 Turning to the third issue, the impact on neighbouring properties, it is considered that no undue harm would be caused to those properties directly opposite the site. Views from the new flats across Springfield Drive are not considered to be harmful, given that this is the public side of these dwellings where the level of amenity is expected to be less than that of the private spaces to the rear. Furthermore, future occupiers sitting on balconies will overlook the adjoining industrial estate, and not existing dwellings. Your Officers are also satisfied that the proposed units would not be demonstrably harmed by the existing industrial estate to the east of Thornhill Walk, or by the Fitzharris Arms public house to the north, both of which happily co-exist with existing residential properties.
- 5.6 On the issue of parking and access, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable. The parking provision shown provides 1 space for each 1 bedroom flat. Adequate visibility can be achieved at the new access to ensure pedestrian and highway safety and turning arrangements are acceptable. Consequently, the County Engineer has no objections to the proposal. In respect of the access arrangements to the industrial estate, the County Engineer considers that this proposal will not adversely affect the current arrangements. Planning permission has previously been granted for a development of 10 units on the site, and your Officers consider that it would be unreasonable to now alter the proposed scheme to enable vehicles to enter and leave the industrial site more easily, or to provide additional parking for users of the industrial estate. The existing lay-by will be retained under this proposal.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *That authority to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair in order to enable the completion of a S106 Agreement to secure the required financial contribution for highways and social infrastructure.*

1. *TL1 Time Limit*
2. *MC2 Sample Materials*
3. *LS2 Landscaping*
4. *RE7 Boundary details*
5. *Access in accordance with specified plan*

- 6 *Car parking layout in accordance with specified plan*
  - 7 *Bin storage and cycle parking to be constructed prior to first occupation.*
  - 8 *CN8 – details of dormers to be submitted*
  - 6.2 *That authority to refuse planning permission is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning & Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair should the Section 106 Agreement not be completed within the 13week period (which ends on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007).*
- The reason for refusal would be based on the lack of necessary financial contributions towards improving local services and facilities.*