

ECH/2972/16 – Forum Group Ltd.

Demolition of Existing Buildings. Erection of 14 no. Dwellings. Challow Country Club, Woodhill Lane, East Challow, OX12 9PA.

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 Challow Country Club is located approximately half a mile to the north of East Challow. The application seeks permission to demolish the existing buildings and replace them with 14 dwellings with associated parking and landscaping within the previously developed part of the site.
- 1.2 The site is accessed via an existing private road, Woodhill Lane, which connects with the A417 in the village.
- 1.3 The Country Club site is currently occupied by a two storey brick building built in 1977 which houses a gym, squash courts, 5 self contained flats, 8 short term lets, a bar and function room and String Challows night club. To the rear of this building is an 8 tee, 250 yd driving range. The building is surrounded by areas of hard standing including tennis courts and a car park capable of accommodating in the region of 60 cars.
- 1.4 The application proposes 14 dwellings arranged in a courtyard development designed to reflect a group of farm buildings and cottages, to be located within the previously developed part of the site. The proposed dwellings consist of 1 no. 5 bedroom unit, 12 no. 4 bedroom units and 1 no. 3 bedroom unit.
- 1.5 The site has permission for 9 dwellings (granted in 2005) which took a similar courtyard form and extended slightly further back into the site compared to the current scheme. Despite this, the current proposal increases the footprint of the developed area by about 10%.
- 1.6 The site is well contained by existing vegetation which separates it from the surrounding countryside.
- 1.7 Extracts from the application drawings are at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.8 The application comes to Committee as East Challow Parish Council objects to the scheme.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 Outline planning permission was granted in July 1977 for the erection of a members country club including 6 squash courts, 2 open tennis courts, saunas, solarium, changing facilities, club room with bar, children's games room and caretaker's flat. The application included the demolition of existing RAF Nissan huts.
- 2.2 The Reserved Matters application for the above was approved in February 1978.
- 2.3 Planning permission was granted for the change of use of farm land to golf driving range and the erection of the associated booths in January 1989.
- 2.4 Planning permission was granted in November 1996 for the change of use of offices to form 3 self contained flats and 3 bedrooms.
- 2.5 Various other applications for extensions and alterations to the existing use were approved between 1979 and 2000.
- 2.6 Planning permission was granted by Committee in April 2005 for the replacement of the existing buildings with 9 dwellings in a similar layout to that now proposed (ECH/2972/13). The adopted policy at that time did not require the provision of any affordable housing.

Extracts from the application plans, and the Committee report and minutes are attached at **Appendix 2**.

- 2.7 A further application was submitted in May 2006 for the erection of 16 dwellings on the site (ECH/2972/14), which was withdrawn. The application was considered unacceptable as the developed area extended beyond the previously developed part of the site.
- 2.8 Planning permission was refused in January 2007 for the erection of 14 dwellings on the site (ECH/2972/15). That application was the same as that currently under consideration. The application was refused due to the failure of the applicants to provide the relevant contributions towards affordable housing and local infrastructure. The decision notice is attached at **Appendix 3**.

3.0 **Planning Policies**

- 3.1 The application site lies approximately half a mile to the north of East Challow, the nearest village, and to the north west of Wantage, in the open countryside. The site's development for residential purposes must be considered in the context of the Adopted Structure Plan's General and Housing Policies and the adopted Local Plan Policies.
- 3.2 Structure Plan Policy G1 relates to the general strategy, G2 encourages development in locations that reduce the need to travel by car, G5 seeks to prevent sporadic and ribbon development in the open countryside, and H1 provides the general strategy for the location of housing.
- 3.3 The most relevant Local Plan Policies are GS2 (development in the open countryside), GS6 (redevelopment of buildings outside settlements), and H13 (development outside settlements). Policy H17 relates to the provision of affordable housing.

4.0 **Consultations**

- 4.1 East Challow Parish Council objects to the application. A copy of their full comments is attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 4.2 The County Engineer has raised no objections in relation to highway safety, stating that the proposal is likely to result in a reduction in trip generation. However, as the proposal is likely to have a greater impact on the local road network during peak periods, a contribution of £7,000 is requested towards public transport services and £10,000 towards the Wantage and Grove Integrated Transport Strategy.
- 4.3 The Council's Housing Officer has confirmed that, due to the remote location of the site, on-site affordable housing provision would not be appropriate, therefore an off site contribution is requested. The applicants have offered a figure of £60,000 per unit which the Housing Officer has confirmed would not be sufficient to secure provision elsewhere. £70,000 per unit has been requested. The issue relating to the number of units has been the subject of some debate and will be covered in section 5 of this report.
- 4.4 The County Council's Developer Funding Officer has requested the following contributions towards County Services and Infrastructure:

Education - £165,852
Library - £4,105
Waste Management - £1,505
Museum and Resource Centre - £193
Social and Health Care – £1,785
Administration and monitoring - £1,500
Total – £174,940

4.5 The Architects Panel and Consultant Architect's comments on the proposed design are attached at **Appendix 5** (these comments relate to the previous application for 14 units which, in design terms, is the same as the current proposal).

4.6 One letter of comment has been received from a local resident raising the following issues:

- Concern over the deteriorating state of Woodhill Lane.
- The status of the lane should be clarified. (Drayton Highway Depot has confirmed it is a private un-adopted road).
- Sewerage needs to be taken into consideration.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 The site has an extant permission for 9 dwellings, therefore the principle of residential development has been established. The policy issues raised by the proposal were considered during the previous application, and the Committee report and minutes are attached at **Appendix 2**.

5.2 The current application seeks permission for an additional 5 dwellings within the same area of the site. The main issues to consider therefore are; i) whether the addition of 5 units is so materially different from the approved scheme to warrant refusal in principle; ii) whether the revised design of the scheme is acceptable; and iii) whether the reasons for refusal on the previous application for 14 dwellings have been overcome in relation to County Council contributions and affordable housing.

5.3 The current application seeks permission for 5 additional dwellings. The area of the site to be developed is marginally smaller than the previous scheme with the garden areas of units 8-11 finishing in line with the near side of the current driving range building. The previous scheme extended to the location of the far edge of this building. Despite this, the floor space of the whole development would be about 10% greater than the 9 unit scheme. The current proposal still provides sufficient parking and amenity space within the site, however, and at 21 dwelling per hectare makes more efficient use of the land available than the scheme of 9 which equated to around 11 dwellings per hectare.

5.4 The previous scheme was considered acceptable due to the significant reduction in traffic movements generated by 9 dwellings compared to that of the current use. The current 14 unit proposal would still result in a significant reduction in traffic movements (around 77% according to the applicant's statement) compared to that of the current use, a view which is endorsed by the County Engineer. Your Officers, therefore, consider that the principle of an additional 5 units on the site is acceptable

5.5 Whilst the current design differs from the approved proposal, the design approach is similar. The proposed dwellings would be located around a central courtyard with open fronted agricultural style car ports. The Council's Consultant Architect has referred to the importance of the architectural details of the scheme and the details of the access and parking areas. Conditions are recommended below requiring the submission of such details. In addition, the proposed development would be lower and less visually prominent than the existing building on the site.

5.6 Under the provisions of the adopted Local Plan, the threshold for the provision of affordable housing is 5 or more dwellings. All proposals above this threshold should provide 40% affordable housing under Policy H17, which equates to 6 out of the proposed 14 dwellings. The Council's Housing Officer, however, has confirmed that this particular site would not be suitable for on site provision due to its relatively remote location, and therefore would prefer a financial contribution of £70,000 per unit towards off site provision. This would result in a total contribution of £420,000 based on 6 units. The applicants have stated however that this requirement would render the scheme of 14 units unviable due to the fact that the site was purchased for a sum based on the permission for 9 units without the requirement for any

affordable housing. They contend that the provision should be based on 40% of the additional 5 units now proposed which would equate to 2 units. On this basis, the applicants have agreed to provide £120,000 (£60,000 for each unit rather than £70,000 as required).

- 5.7 The County Council has also requested the provision of contributions towards local infrastructure, services, and highways, totalling £191,940. Such contributions are required in order to mitigate against the pressure on local services and facilities created by additional residential development. The applicants have stated that this requirement would also result in the 14 dwelling scheme being unviable.
- 5.8 In relation to the issue of viability, Officers have requested details of the applicants' development figures (to be treated in strictest confidence) to assess whether the required contributions are likely to affect the scheme's viability. The figures are in the process of being reviewed by an independent consultant and an update on the viability of the proposed development will be provided at the Meeting.
- 5.9 Both County Council contributions and affordable housing would have to be provided by way of a Section 106 Agreement.
- 5.10 Officers consider that if agreement can be reached on the level of contributions in relation to affordable housing and infrastructure provision, the proposal will be acceptable.

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 to allow the completion of a Section 106 Agreement to secure the agreed level of financial contribution for highways, social infrastructure, and affordable housing.*

1. TL1 Time Limit – Full Application
2. MC2 Submission of Materials (Samples)
3. LS2 Landscaping Scheme to be Submitted
4. RE7 Submission of Boundary Details
5. RE8 Submission of Drainage Details (Foul and Surface)
6. RE2 Restriction on Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings
7. *Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, full architectural details of the development, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. Such details shall include brick detailing, dormer windows, and eaves detailing. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*
8. MC7 Submission of details of windows/doors, rainwater goods etc.
9. *Notwithstanding the extent of the red line on the application drawings, the residential curtilages of plots 8 to 11 shall not extend beyond the western edge of the driving range building as shown on the approved plan ref W1446:112 Rev P8 without the prior grant of planning permission.*
10. *Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, full details of the proposed surface treatment of the access, parking and turning areas shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

6.2 *That Authority to refuse planning permission is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair should the Section 106 Agreement not be completed within the 13 week period (which expires on the 28th May 2007). The reason for refusal would be based on the lack of necessary financial contributions towards improving local services and facilities and affordable housing.*