

## CUM/95/8 – Mr D Hackett

### Proposed development of 4 x 2 bed flats with refuse bin and cycle stores. Re-positioned and upgraded vehicular access and drive. (Resubmission). Plot 2, 205A Cumnor Hill. OX2 9PJ

#### 1.0 **The Proposal**

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a two storey building comprising 4 x 2 bedroom flats. It is a revised scheme to one that was refused in September 2006 for 5 x 2 bed units.
- 1.2 The site is currently a vacant plot of land located on the south east side of Cumnor Hill at the western end of the built up area of the hill. It is bounded by recent redevelopments of both Nos. 205 and 207 Cumnor Hill that comprise medium to large detached dwellings.
- 1.3 The proposed building is of a traditional design, and has been designed to emulate the large dwellings nearby. It differs from the previously refused scheme by reducing the number of units from 5 to 4 and so the building is much reduced in bulk. It now appears more akin to a large dwelling than the block of flats that was previously proposed.
- 1.4 A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, its design and layout together with the design statement are attached at **Appendix 1**. A copy of the previously refused scheme is attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.5 The application comes to Committee because a number of objection letters have been received and the views of Cumnor Parish Council differ from the recommendation.

#### 2.0 **Planning History**

- 2.1 In June 2005, planning permission was refused for the demolition of 205A and its replacement with 1 x 5 bed dwelling and 2 x 4 bed dwellings.
- 2.2 In October 2005, planning permission was granted for a 2 storey detached dwelling on the site. A copy of the approved plans is attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.3 Planning permission was refused in September 2006 for an alternative scheme for 4 x 2 bedroom flats and 1 x 1 bedroom flat on the grounds that the building was excessively bulky, would overlook neighbouring properties, would lead to intensification of a substandard access and the parking area to the front would harm the visual amenity of the area.
- 2.4 A further application to redevelop the site with 2 x 4 bed detached dwellings was withdrawn in February 2007.

#### 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 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 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.

3.4 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 Cumnor Parish Council has objected to the application and their comments are attached at **Appendix 4.**

4.2 County Engineer – no objections, subject to conditions.

4.3 6 letters of objection have been received, which are summarised as follows:

- Flats are not in keeping with the existing housing in the area.
- The proposal does not provide sufficient amenity space for the number of flats proposed, and could lead to trespassing on neighbouring land.
- The height and bulk of the building remains substantial.
- The flats will overlook neighbouring dwellings. There is no landscaping proposed at the rear to mitigate this, and it is difficult to see how any could be adequately provided.
- Four flats are too many and will create a precedent for flats on this part of Cumnor Hill. The site should only be developed with a single dwelling.
- The number of flats will lead to a significant amount of traffic generation to the detriment of highway safety.
- There is inadequate privacy for the ground floor flats. These will be compromised by use of the communal garden and parking area.
- The vehicular access to the side will result in noise and disturbance to neighbouring dwellings.

#### 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, and 5) precedent.

5.2 On the first issue, Cumnor Hill is identified in the Local Plan as an area that can accommodate new housing development providing the layout, mass and design would not harm the character of the area. PPS 3 'Housing' also makes it a priority to use previously developed land for new housing. Previously developed land includes the curtilage of an existing dwelling, although PPS3 does say that not all previously developed land is necessarily suitable for housing development. Furthermore, PPS3 encourages the use of innovative approaches to achieve higher densities within existing settlements. In this respect, paragraphs 9 and 10 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 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 building has been designed to appear as a large dwelling similar to existing properties that surround the site. Whilst it is larger than the dwelling approved in 2006 on the site, it is still set back from Cumnor Hill, and as such will not be overly prominent in the street scene and is not considered to be an overdevelopment of the site. There would be about 175sqm of communal garden space to the rear for use by occupants of the flats, which is considered a sufficient provision.
- 5.4 Turning to the third issue, the impact on neighbouring properties, the properties most affected will be those that immediately surround the site. The new building has been carefully designed and sited to respect the amenity and privacy of existing dwellings that adjoin the site. As a result, no direct overlooking between the new building and adjoining dwellings will occur. The proposed building is also no higher than the existing approved dwelling, measuring 8.3m to the ridge. Any impact on light or privacy to neighbouring dwellings, therefore, is not considered to be sufficiently harmful to warrant refusal.
- 5.5 On the issue of parking and access, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable. The parking provision shown provides 2 spaces for each flat. Adequate visibility can also be achieved at the new access to ensure pedestrian and highway safety, and turning arrangements within the site are acceptable. Consequently, the County Engineer has no objections to the proposal.
- 5.6 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 application.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

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

1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
2. *MC2 – Sample Materials*
3. *RE8 – Submission of drainage details*
4. *RE7 – Boundary details*
5. *RE22 – Slab level*
6. *Access in accordance with specified plan*
7. *Turning space in accordance with specified plan*
8. *Car parking layout in accordance with specified plan*
9. *LS4 – Submission of landscaping scheme*
10. *Bin storage and cycle parking to be constructed and available for use prior to first occupation.*