

SHR/20042 – Sovereign Housing Association

Erection of 14 New Dwellings and New Access. Land adjacent to 31 Stainswick Lane, Shrivenham, SN7 8DX

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks permission for the erection of 6 houses and 8 flats on land adjacent to Stainswick Lane, Shrivenham. The applicant is Sovereign Housing Association and the dwellings will be affordable with a mix of tenure between rented (7 units) and shared ownership (7 units).
- 1.2 The scheme includes off street parking and some garaging to serve the proposed units.
- 1.3 The site is currently open agricultural land which abuts the existing built up area of Shrivenham to the south of the village centre.
- 1.4 The application has been submitted on a “rural exception site” as a result of a local housing needs survey carried out by the Parish Council which identified a requirement in the village for 14 units of mixed size and tenure.
- 1.5 Extracts from the application plans are at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.6 The application comes to Committee as more than 4 letters of objection have been received.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 There is no planning history relating to this site.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 The site is located outside the main built up area of the village on land which would not normally be considered suitable for residential development. However the application is for affordable housing to meet a need identified in the local housing needs survey. The application therefore needs to be considered against Policy H18 of the adopted Local Plan.
- 3.2 Policy H18 refers to Rural Exception Sites and allows for small scale affordable housing schemes within or on the edges of settlements on sites which would not otherwise be considered acceptable, subject to certain criteria. These include the requirement for the development to meet an identified local need in terms of numbers, types, size and affordability, that the development should be within or adjacent to the existing built up area of a village and not harm the character of the settlement, and that secure arrangements are in place to ensure that the houses are occupied by local people in need of affordable housing in the long term.
- 3.3 Other relevant policies include DC1, DC5 and DC9 which refer to the design of new development, access and parking considerations, and impact on neighbouring properties.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 Shrivenham Parish Council fully supports the application stating: “The housing needs survey conducted in 2004 (in conjunction with ORCC) revealed a need for 27 houses. The proposed site fits the criteria for an exception site and of the other possible sites considered this proved to be the closest to the village amenities (Post Office, School, Surgery and Shops). The style of the proposed houses is in keeping with the variety of designs of the existing houses. Agreement to this proposal is subject to boundary conditions, building materials and final site layout.”

- 4.2 The County Engineer has no objections subject to conditions and a contribution of £4059 towards improving local bus services. In addition, the applicants are required to pay £2000 to pay for the relocation of the 30 mph speed limit sign which is currently located by the proposed site access.
- 4.3 The Council's Housing Officer is confident that the 2004 Housing Needs Survey still remains a reliable indicator of need in the parish and advises that, at the 14th June this year, there were 191 people on the housing register citing Shrivenham as their preferred choice for housing. His full comments are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 4.4 The Crime Prevention Design Advisor has no objections subject to the use of laminated glass to a minimum thickness of 6.4mm on the ground floor rear windows of the properties as the rear fencing is to be open post and rail. This is not something that can reasonably be required as a planning condition however.
- 4.5 The Council's Consultant Architect is generally supportive of the scheme but has made some suggestions to improve the house designs and the access road. His full comments are attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.6 The County Developer Funding Officer has recommended a contribution of £4273 towards County Council services (Library, Waste, Museum and Social/Health care).
- 4.7 33 letters of objection and 6 letters of comments have been received from local residents raising the following concerns:
- This is the wrong site for affordable housing. Highworth Road and Station Road are better options.
 - The proposed development will erode the character of this beautiful area.
 - The level of housing need has been overstated.
 - The development will have a harmful impact on the character of the area.
 - The site is too close to the cemetery which should remain a tranquil environment.
 - The development will result in traffic congestion in the area.
 - Stainswick Lane is too narrow.
 - Stainswick Lane is the only access for railway maintenance vehicles.
 - Villagers rejected this site in the public consultation.
 - There are bats and other protected species on the site.
 - The drainage system is not suitable to serve additional dwellings.
 - There is not enough parking provided within the site which will result in parking on Stainswick Lane.
- 4.8 A petition containing 515 signatures opposing the development has also been received.
- 4.9 1 Letter of support has been received from a local resident stating that they object to the methods used to obtain signatures on the petition and that the document circulated does not say anything about more preferable sites that affordable housing could be built on.
- 5.0 **Officer Comments**
- 5.1 The main issues to consider in determining this application are; i) the principle of the proposed development in this location; ii) the suitability of the site for the proposed development; iii) the impact of the proposed development on the character of the area; iv) the impact on the immediately neighbouring properties; v) access and parking considerations; and vi) contributions required by the County Council.
- 5.2 Policy H18 of the adopted Local Plan allows for small scale developments for affordable housing on sites which would not normally be considered acceptable for residential development. The proviso of this policy is that the proposed housing is designed to meet a specific need identified in a local housing needs survey.

- 5.3 In 2004 the Parish Council carried out a housing needs survey with the help of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. This resulted in a report published in July 2004 revealing a need for 14 new houses in the village. A copy of this report is attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 5.4 The proposed development has been formulated to meet the need identified in the survey. The site is adjacent to the existing built up area with good links to the village centre, and a Section 106 agreement is being drawn up to ensure the houses remain available for local people in perpetuity. Your Officers therefore consider that the proposed development meets the requirements of Policy H18 and is acceptable in principle.
- 5.5 The accompanying text to Policy H18 states that exception sites “should be supported in principle by the local community, as represented by the parish council.” Whilst Officers are concerned, therefore, by the level of local objections to this proposal, it is a vital consideration that the Parish Council fully supports the application.
- 5.6 A number of potential sites were considered by the Parish Council in consultation with Officers and the County Engineer. Stainwick Lane proved a good option due to its relationship to the existing settlement pattern, and its proximity and good pedestrian links to the main services and facilities in the village. The future occupants could therefore be easily integrated with the village. Other sites were also identified as potential options, although some were rejected as a safe access could not be provided.
- 5.7 Officers acknowledge that the proposed development will have an impact on the prevailing character of this rural edge to the village. Exception sites are usually proposed in edge of village locations due to the very nature of the policy. A condition requiring the submission and implementation of a landscaping scheme would help soften the visual impact of this development, which includes areas of open space within the layout. The majority of the housing is set back from the road, and the hedging along the road frontage is proposed to be retained. The development, therefore, will not be overly prominent in the street scene.
- 5.8 In relation to neighbouring properties, the only property immediately adjoining the site is 31 Stainwick Lane. This property has a large window on its flank wall facing the application site, and main windows to the rear of the house. Proposed units 1,2 and 3 are set back from the line of this neighbour so that the side facing window overlooks an area of landscaping and a parking court. The flank wall of unit 1 is set between 4 and 5 metres from the boundary with no 31, and despite being due south east, Officers consider that it is set far enough away to not have such an adverse impact on the amenity of this neighbour in terms of loss of light to justify refusing permission.
- 5.9 The site would be accessed via a new access from Stainwick Lane. The County Engineer is satisfied that both the location of the site and the details of the access and parking arrangements are acceptable in highway safety terms subject to conditions relating to details.
- 5.10 Members will note that the County Council has requested certain contributions towards service improvements. Whilst Officers consider that the requirement to finance the relocation of the 30 mph speed limit sign as a direct result of the development is justified, it is considered that the financial pressures already placed on such affordable housing sites to provide low cost housing need that margins are extremely tight. Furthermore the housing will be restricted to local people who reside, or have done so in the past, within the village. Officers therefore consider that in this instance such contributions should not be required, as was the case in any other recent proposal for a rural exception site in Kingston Bagpuize.

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 S106 Agreement to ensure that the housing remains affordable for local people in perpetuity.*
1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
 2. *MC2 – Submission of Material Samples*
 3. *RE7 – Submission of Boundary Details*
 4. *RE8 – Submission of Drainage Details (Foul and Surface)*
 5. *LS4 – Landscaping Scheme (incorporating existing trees) to be submitted.*
 6. *HY4 – Access to Specification (Prior to Commencement)*
 7. *HY10 – Visibility (Access)*
 8. *MC34 – Contaminated Land*
 9. *RE22 – Floor/Slab Levels*
 10. *Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved full details of the proposed surface treatment of the 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.*
 11. *Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved, bin stores shall be provided on the site, details of which shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. Such details shall include location, design and external appearance, and materials. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*
 12. *MC8 – Obscured glazing – north west elevation of unit 1.*