

HAR/19966/1 – Bellwood Homes

Demolition of shed and erection of two detached dwellings with associated garages and improvements to existing access and provision of additional parking spaces for Blenheim Terrace and Burr Cottage.

Land to rear of Blenheim Terrace, Burr Street, Harwell.

1.0 The Proposal

1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing shed on the site and the erection of two detached dwellings with attached and integral garaging. The site comprises an orchard area to the rear of properties fronting Burr Street, and lies within Harwell Conservation Area.

1.2 Each proposed dwelling comprises four bedrooms with large private amenity areas to the rear. The proposal comprises an informal courtyard layout to the front of the dwellings with surface materials to be agreed at a later date.

1.3 Since the original submission, the application has been amended as follows:

- Reduction in the footprint of the proposed dwellings.
- Reduction of some ridge heights.
- The re-siting of the dwellings further away from the northern boundary.
- Changes to the courtyard design.
- Vehicle tracking is shown within the site.

1.4 A copy of the revised plans showing the location, layout and design of the proposal are attached at **Appendix 1**.

1.5 The application comes to Committee because the views of Harwell Parish Council differ from the recommendation.

2.0 Planning History

2.1 A previous application for two dwellings on the site was refused in April 2007 (HAR/19966). The reasons for refusal were due to the design, scale, height and suburban layout and appearance of the proposed properties on the elevated site within the Conservation Area.

2.2 That decision has been appealed against and the appeal statements are being held in abeyance pending determination of the current application.

3.0 Planning Policies

3.1 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011*

Policy HE1 requires that development within a Conservation Area preserves or enhances the established character or appearance of that area. Development should respect the context of the site in terms of scale, height, mass and materials.

3.2 Policy H11 states that new residential development on sites within the built up areas of villages including Harwell will be permitted provided there is no harm to the character of the settlement and the proposal would not result in the loss of open space.

3.3 Policies DC1, DC5, DC6, DC8 and DC9 (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 and the development is acceptable in terms of highway safety.

4.0 **Consultations**

Original plans

4.1 Harwell Parish Council has objected to the application on the grounds that properties in Blenheim Terrace will be overlooked and the access onto Burr Street has not been widened posing a safety risk.

4.2 County Engineer – A holding objection to the original plans in respect of securing parking spaces for Blenheim Terrace, design of the access and vehicle turning within the site.

4.3 Consultant Architect – comments attached at **Appendix 2**.

4.4 Architects Panel – Proposals were “a lost opportunity” to create an attractive courtyard. The scale and number of units, however, are considered acceptable in the context of a courtyard setting.

4.5 4 letters of support confirming:

- Pleased with proposals for off street parking for properties in Blenheim Terrace
- Will help with parking problems
- Pleased with rear access to properties in Blenheim Terrace
- New application has taken full account of parking area and access
- Will significantly improve highway safety

4.6 1 letter of objection on the following grounds:

- Development unacceptable on highway visibility grounds
- Development is not deliverable due to the requirement to acquire land from Tudor Cottage
- Proposed access has pinch points insufficient for refuse/emergency vehicles
- No safe pedestrian access to the site
- Current parking on Burr Street has the benefit of slowing traffic
- Disputed that the site is a brownfield site
- Loss of orchard is harmful to the character of the Conservation Area
- Reduced amenity for adjoining residents
- Proposals are not well designed
- Walking and cycling are not promoted

Amended plans

4.7 The County Engineer has stated that the amended plans address his previous concerns in relation to on site turning and design of the access point.

4.8 Any further comments received will be reported at the Meeting.

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 Conservation Area, 3) the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, 4) the safety of the access and parking arrangements.
- 5.2 On the first issue, Harwell is identified as a settlement which is appropriate for new residential development on sites within the built up limits of the settlement (Policy H11). The site is within the built up limits of the village and the previous application was not refused on matters of principle. Subject to consideration of the impact of the proposal on the character of the area and residential amenity, therefore, the principle of development on this site is considered acceptable.
- 5.3 Regarding the second issue, the development in the form proposed is significantly amended from the previously refused scheme. The scale of the proposed dwellings is significantly reduced and the design significantly enhanced from the non-descript suburban design of the previous proposal. The layout of the proposed scheme has been amended following comments from your Officers and is now a more informal courtyard scheme, which is considered much more appropriate on this site. The amended proposal has also moved the dwellings further away from the northern boundary, which is again considered to more sympathetically reflect this edge of settlement location.
- 5.4 The design of the individual dwellings incorporates a variety of ridge heights with the overall scale being much lower than the previously refused scheme. A variety of ridge heights also reflects the character of the area, and the elevational design is supported by the Architects Panel and Consultant Architect. A section drawing has been submitted which shows that the proposed dwellings are comparable in height to the adjoining Tudor Orchard.
- 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 adjoining the application site. With the exception of no. 4 Blenheim Terrace, properties fronting Burr Street are generally 21m from the closest point of the proposed development, and are approximately 30m from any windows that would directly face them. Even accounting for the change in levels of approximately 2m, it is considered that these distances are more than sufficient to preserve the amenity of these properties.
- 5.6 No. 4 Blenheim Terrace is different to other properties in Blenheim Terrace as it has a two storey rear projection, which results in it being much larger than the other properties in Blenheim Terrace. It also has a much smaller rear garden than the other properties in Blenheim Terrace. The proposed Plot 2 is sited to the rear of no. 4 Blenheim Terrace and the ground levels are approximately the same in this area.
- 5.7 There is a north facing window at first floor level of no. 4 Blenheim Terrace. However, the distance between this window and the proposed dwelling on Plot 2 at first floor level is 15m, and there are no windows in the proposed dwelling that would face south. A single storey garage is proposed on Plot 2, which is 10m away from the rear first floor window on no. 4 Blenheim Terrace.

- 5.8 Tudor Orchard (to the west) is not accurately shown on the application drawings as a large rear extension was approved in 1999, which has since been implemented. Your Officers have been careful to ensure that the proposal respects the residential amenity of Tudor Orchard, and only a single storey element is proposed closest to this property. This is sited 4.75m from the boundary (allowing room for future landscaping) and has no windows facing Tudor Orchard. This relationship is considered to be acceptable.
- 5.9 On the issue of parking and access, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable. The County Engineer has confirmed that the proposed access is acceptable to serve two additional dwellings. Vehicle tracking details have been submitted which demonstrate that, should it be required, a refuse vehicle can enter and exit the site in a forward gear. The width of the access is sufficient to allow a fire engine to enter the site.
- 5.10 For this level of proposed development it is considered unlikely that a vehicle would need to wait in the street in order to enter the site. While there is a pinch point in the access, there is sufficient room to wait off street if there were ever any conflict at the access.
- 5.11 A number of representations received have been on the grounds of supporting proposed parking for the properties in Blenheim Terrace. The applicants are proposing one space for each of the four properties within the application site. Recently, there has been an Inspector's appeal decision in relation to a proposed dropped kerb and hardstanding to provide off street parking to the front of no. 4 Blenheim Terrace. The appeal was dismissed. Parking for properties in Blenheim Terrace takes place on the street and there is currently no off street parking.
- 5.12 Whilst this element of the proposal will enhance highway safety and is to be welcomed, it is not considered to be a part of the proposal that can reasonably be required formally through a condition or agreement because the proposed development itself is considered acceptable on its own merits.
- 5.13 The previous application is a material consideration, and it was refused without a highways reason for refusal. The current proposal is a slight improvement on the previous proposal in that the access is taken slightly further away from the corner of Burr Cottage, which increases visibility at the access.
- 5.14 In conclusion, the proposal is considered to be a significant improvement on the previous refusal in terms of scale and overall design. There is not considered to be a significant impact on adjoining residential amenity and issues of access and highway safety are considered to be acceptable.

6.0 **Recommendation**

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

1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
2. *MC2 – Sample Materials*
3. *RE2 – Restriction on extensions / alterations to dwellings (PD rights removed)*

4. *RE8 – Submission of drainage details*
5. *RE7 – Submission of boundary details.*
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. *Full details of bin storage and cycle parking to be submitted prior to first occupation.*
11. *HY3 – Access in accordance with plan*
12. *HY16 – Turning Space in accordance with plan*
13. *MC20 – amended plans*