

NHI/2653/8- D – Bellway Homes

Approval of reserved matters for residential development comprising of 38 1 and 2 bed apartments with associated parking and landscaping.

Elms Road Nursery School, Elms Road, Botley, OX2 9JZ (North Hinksey Parish).

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks approval of reserved matters for 38 flats, comprising of 36 x 2 bed and 2 x 1 bed units with associated parking and amenity space. Outline planning permission was granted in October 2005 for residential development (no specified limit on the number of units) with access being considered at the outline stage.
- 1.2 The proposal is to build 3 blocks each being 3 storeys in height with block C having an additional 4th storey element on its eastern side. Block A comprises 6 x 2 bed units and block B, 12 x 2 bed units. The flats are arranged around central entrances and stairs with each entrance giving access to 2 units per floor in block A and 4 units per floor in block B. Block C is the largest building and comprises 20 units (14 x 2 bed and 6 x 1 bed) with 2 communal entrances. 12 units are also allocated as affordable housing in accordance with the Section 106 Agreement. The plans show car parking (1 space for each flat and 2 visitor spaces) for the flats is to be provided across the site with the majority of spaces to the rear (east side) of the site.
- 1.3 The proposed buildings are of a contemporary design, using modern materials and incorporating steep pitched roofs with laminated metal edging, metal framed glazed balconies, brick with rendered panels and larch boarding. Sample materials will be available at the Meeting.
- 1.4 A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, its design and layout together with extracts from the design and access statement are attached at **Appendix 1**. The plans have been amended to take account of comments from the Architects' Panel and the Consultant Architect.
- 1.5 The application comes to Committee because a number of objection letters have been received and North Hinksey Parish Council objects to the application.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 The planning history of the site relates to alterations and new buildings for the school and children's centre, the last application being approved in September 2003 for new general teaching classrooms, community room and support accommodation.
- 2.2 The outline planning application for residential development was permitted in October 2005.

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 Botley, 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 North Hinksey Parish Council objects to the proposal. Their comments are attached at **Appendix 2.**
- 4.2 County Engineer – no objections.
- 4.3 Drainage Engineer – no objections.
- 4.4 Environment Agency – no objections.
- 4.5 Environmental Health – no objections subject to following the recommendations of the noise assessment and land contamination informative.
- 4.6 Consultant Architect – comments attached at **Appendix 3.**
- 4.7 Architects Panel – "No objection to contemporary approach but need to look at details and window styles. Possible increase in roof pitches to make more enlivened skyline."
- 4.8 Waste Management Team – no objections.
- 4.9 Crime Prevention Design Advisor – "no objections to layout, the only matter for concern is the large car park and its location adjacent to a footpath. The existing chain link fencing should be replaced with a wire mesh style fencing and additional shrub planting to protect and screen the car parking area otherwise the car park will be a target for crime".

4.10 7 letters of objection have been received, which are summarised as follows:

- Building on this site will exacerbate the current drainage problems in the area.
- Proposal will lead to increased parking problems in the area.
- The access will cause danger to school children and elderly patients of the medical centre.
- The scale of the development is out of keeping. The developers have increased the scale of the proposal from that originally proposed and this is unacceptable. The buildings are higher than surrounding buildings and will cut light to the school and nearby residential dwellings.
- The original application proposed only 30 flats in buildings with pitched roofs. This modern design with 38 flats and modern roofs is out of keeping with the character of the area.
- On site parking is insufficient for the number of flats and the development will cause extra traffic to the detriment of road users, many of whom are children walking to the local school.
- The earthworks on site are likely to destroy the tree roots of the mature horse chestnut trees.
- The close proximity of block B to the school playground will block light and overlook the play area.

4.11 1 letter of objection has been received in response to the amended plans stating that block B is still very close to the school playground and still overlooks it.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 The principle of developing this site for residential use was established with the grant of outline consent in 2005. The main issues in this case, therefore, are considered to be 1) the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including its design, 2) the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, and 3) the safety and adequacy of the parking arrangements.

5.2 On the first 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 timber boarding and a PVC single ply roof covering. The design is clearly different to the more traditional housing found in this part of Botley but this, in itself, does not make the proposal harmful. Officers consider the contemporary design to be wholly acceptable in this location. Furthermore, the Consultant Architect has commented that the design is one which “merits encouragement” and that in respect to the amended plans “as far as design issues are concerned planning permission could now be granted”. The Architects Panel also positively endorses the design approach to the scheme. Your Officers consider, therefore, that there would be no justification for a design based refusal.

5.3 The scheme has a density in excess of 40 dwellings per hectare, which accords with Local Plan Policy H15. There is on site communal garden space for use by occupants of the flats, in addition to private balconies on the buildings and on site car parking space is considered sufficient given the proximity of the site to nearby shopping facilities and bus services into Oxford. Officers, therefore, consider that the proposal is not an overdevelopment of the site.

5.4 Regarding the second issue, the impact on neighbouring properties, it is considered that no undue harm would be caused to those properties in Elms Road and West Way.

The main impact arises from the relationship of block B to the Nursery School site to the north. Whilst, undoubtedly this impact could benefit from the building being 2 storeys on this boundary, the dominance and overshadowing from the 3 storey building as proposed is, on balance, considered acceptable. The building, at 16.6m in width, does not run the full length of the outdoor play area (which is approximately 63m in length) and is set 12m back from the glazed walkway on the main building. It also ranges in height from 8m to 10m (a typical 2 storey dwelling normally measures 8m high for comparison). Recessed reveals in the brick work have been introduced to provide some relief and articulation to the elevation. The fenestration on this side of block B has also been kept to a minimum with only kitchen windows overlooking the school. Notwithstanding the objectors' concerns on the issue of overlooking, it is considered that such limited surveillance is acceptable, given that this is an educational establishment where the level of amenity is expected to be less than that of the private spaces to the rear of dwellings.

5.5 On the issue of parking and access, the proposed arrangements provide 1 space for each flat with 2 additional spaces for visitors, giving a total of 40 spaces (by comparison, the illustrative plan submitted with the outline application showed 41 spaces for 30 flats). Given the site's accessible location and the car free development of 12 flats recently permitted at no29 West Way, it is considered that this level of car parking provision is acceptable. The access and driveway remain as approved under the outline permission where impacts on pedestrian and highway safety and turning arrangements were considered acceptable. Consequently, the County Engineer has no objections to the reserved matters as proposed.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *That reserved matters be approved subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL3 – Time Limit reserved matters*
2. *MC2 – Sample Materials*
3. *LS2 – Landscaping*
4. *RE7 – Boundary details*
5. *Car parking layout in accordance with specified plan*
6. *Bin storage and cycle parking to be constructed prior to first occupation.*
7. *CN8 – details of window reveals to be submitted.*