

**CUM/80/29-D – Persimmon Homes (Thames Valley) Ltd  
Approval of reserved matters for a residential development with associated parking, open space and landscaping. (Resubmission).  
Timbmet Ltd, Cumnor Hill, Oxford, OX2 9PH.**

**1.0 The Proposal**

- 1.1 This application seeks approval of reserved matters for the redevelopment of the Timbmet site with 192 dwellings with associated parking, open space and landscaping. It is a resubmission of a scheme that was refused in November 2007.
- 1.2 The site, measuring 7.4 hectares in total, lies on the south side of Cumnor Hill and slopes up from north to south towards Hurst Hill – a SSSI that adjoins the southern boundary. Adjoining land to the south, west and east lies within the Oxford Green Belt and the North Corallian Ridge, a locally designed area of high landscape value. No 151 Cumnor Hill, a Grade II listed building adjoins the site at the north east corner. There are also further residential properties to the east at this part of the site. To the north / west of the site lie 2 car dealerships and Timbmet’s HQ office building.
- 1.3 The site is an allocated housing site as identified by Policy H3 of the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.4 The proposal is to build 192 dwellings on 4.8 hectares of the total site area, which achieves a density of 40 dwellings per hectare. 77 dwellings will be affordable units, which equates to 40% affordable provision.
- 1.5 Outline planning permission was granted in February 2007 with the matter of access considered at that time. The reserved matters therefore are: Layout, Scale, External Appearance and Landscaping.
- 1.6 A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, its design and layout together with extracts from the design statement are attached at **Appendix 1**. The plans have been amended to take account of changes requested by Officers, statutory Consultees, and other interested parties.
- 1.7 The application comes to Committee because Cumnor Parish Council objects to the proposal and several letters of objection have been received.

**2.0 Planning History**

- 2.1 The majority of the planning history relates to Timbmet’s use of the site. Outline planning permission was granted in February 2007 for residential redevelopment, with the number of dwellings permitted capped at 192 units.
- 2.2 In August 2007, a reserved matters application was submitted for the erection of 192 dwellings. The application was refused on 1 November 2007 under delegated authority. A copy of the refused layout plan and the decision notice are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.3 A current planning application to change the use of land to the east of the site to a playing field with a locally equipped area of play (LEAP) and to provide an attenuation drainage pond has yet to be determined.

### 3.0 **Planning Policies**

#### 3.1 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011*

Policy H3 (sites for housing development in Botley / Cumnor Hill) allocates the application site for new housing development.

3.2 Policy GS3 (development in the Oxford Green Belt) states that the visual amenities of the Green Belt will be protected from development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt which might be harmful by reason of siting, scale or design.

3.3 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).

3.4 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).

3.5 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.

3.6 Policy H17 (affordable housing) seeks a 40% affordable housing provision on sites that are capable of accommodating 15 units or more.

3.7 Policies DC1, DC2, DC3, DC5, DC7, 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; provides adequate measures for waste collection / recycling and energy conservation / energy efficient technologies; is designed to increase security and deter crime; does not cause harm to the amenity of neighbours; that 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.

3.8 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) adopted alongside the Local Plan is also relevant, giving more details in relation to Policy H3 and this site. A copy of this guidance is attached at **Appendix 3**.

3.9 The following Planning Policy Statements are also relevant: PPS1 "Delivering Sustainable Development"; PPS3, "Housing"; PPS9 "Biodiversity and Geological Conservation"; PPS25 "Development and Flood Risk"; PPG2 "Green Belts" and PPG15 "Planning and the Historic Environment".

### 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.

- 4.3 Drainage Engineer – no objections. The general principles of the drainage strategy are accepted. Applicant will need to provide full details in respect of drainage conditions on outline permission.
- 4.4 Consultant Architect – comments are attached at **Appendix 5**.
- 4.5 Environmental Health – no objections. Recommend applying condition for investigation / remediation of contaminated land. (This was imposed on the outline permission).
- 4.6 Waste Management Team – no objections.
- 4.7 BBOWT – no objections.
- 4.8 Natural England – no objections.
- 4.9 Environment Agency – no objections.
- 4.10 Arboricultural Officer – no objections. No major trees on site, although more detail is required about which tree species go where on the proposed landscaping plans.
- 4.11 Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor – no response received at time of writing report. Any comments received will be reported orally at the Meeting.
- 4.12 24 letters of objection have been received, which are summarised as follows:
- The previous reasons for refusal still apply and have not been addressed in this revised scheme.
  - Given the size of the development, it is disappointing that the proposal does not include more environmentally friendly designs and energy efficient / renewable energy sources.
  - Whilst the spread of affordable housing is better than before, it should be spread further throughout the site.
  - The design of the flats lacks imagination and has no architectural merit.
  - Reducing road widths is unlikely to reduce on street parking.
  - Whilst the proposal goes some way to address issues of overshadowing, dominance and overlooking, it remains unneighbourly to 2A/2B Hurst Lane due to the loss of vegetation on the boundary and noise and pollution arising from the use of the proposed garages and parking spaces. The existing boundary vegetation should be retained.
  - The proposed balancing pond should be included within the residential site.
  - 1 play area for 192 dwellings is not enough. Houses and flats are packed in without enough green space. LEAP area is not on site and is not overlooked enough.
  - Site will be visually prominent – buildings should therefore blend in with their surroundings at least as well as the existing structures do.
  - Parking remains insufficient.
  - Development will still adversely impact the setting of No 151 Cumnor Hill, a listed building.
- 4.13 The following issues have also been raised but were either dealt with at the outline stage or are not material to the determination of this reserved matters application:

- Density remains too high for this semi rural area. Suggest reducing the number of units.
- Drainage issues and arrangement for disposal of sewage.
- Social and utility service infrastructure issues – impact on schools, doctors and electricity supplies.
- Increased traffic onto Cumnor Hill.
- Means of access into the site.
- Pelican crossing is too urban for this location. A zebra crossing would be more appropriate.

## 5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 The principle of developing this site for residential use was established with the grant of outline planning permission in February 2007. The main issues to consider, therefore, are whether this revised proposal overcomes the reasons for refusing the previous reserved matters application (see **Appendix 2**).
- 5.2 The first reason for refusal related to design, where “the proposed development by reason of the large building spans, inappropriate uniform style and design of the dwellings, poorly designed blocks of flats, and poor layout style would result in a visually congested development on the site” and “the overall design, height, bulk, scale and massing of the proposed terraced building on plots 189 – 192 and the compact arrangement of plots 1 – 6 on the road frontage represents an intrusive and inappropriate form of development”.
- 5.3 In the light of these concerns, the proposal has been significantly amended. The dwellings have been redesigned to reduce their bulk and massing and to provide more individual styles across the site that reflect local character. The blocks of flats have been significantly altered and redesigned to improve their appearance, massing and setting within the site.
- 5.4 The refusal reason also related to the proposed development failing to take account of or positively exploit the contextual character found in the surrounding area, and the introverted layout failing to exploit the site’s potential.
- 5.5 The layout has been significantly revised to address concerns in relation to the central spine road, its frontage onto Cumnor Hill and its introverted layout in relation to the southern public open space. These changes have resulted in a more organic loose knit layout in relation to the contextual character of the locality. The changes to the southern area in particular enable more dwellings to be orientated to overlook the public open space. This addresses reason 6 by providing additional surveillance over the public open space and combined with the additional footpath link to the west, the layout now provides more permeability into the public open space.
- 5.6 The Consultant Architect is generally supportive of the proposal stating that:
- “What is now submitted seems to me an improvement. The frontage to Cumnor Hill still looks promising, and the building proposed on plot 20 should work well in the vista into the development. To my mind the spaces, roads, junctions – and level of permeability – will be quite interesting”. He has also commented that “the house types proposed are so diverse stylistically.....and would certainly not be monotonous.”

- 5.7 Overall, therefore, the design, layout, massing, and style of the dwellings and flats are now considered acceptable and, as such, Officers consider the previous refusal reasons 1 and 6 have been satisfactorily overcome.
- 5.8 The second reason for refusal related to an inadequate distribution of car parking throughout the site, and the failure to give priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport. This has been satisfactorily addressed through the provision of a footpath link from the bus stop on Cumnor Hill and a more even distribution of car parking spaces throughout the site to serve each dwelling. The 3 bedroom affordable housing units, for example, all now have 2 spaces each. Consequently, Officers consider this refusal reason has now been overcome.
- 5.9 Regarding the impact on neighbouring properties (refusal reasons 4 & 5), the layout has been amended to address the impact of the proposal on 151 Cumnor Hill and 2A/2B Hurst Lane. The 2 dwellings that were adjoining 151 on the original scheme have been omitted and replaced with an end of terrace unit at plot 5. The dwellings adjoining the boundary with 2A/2B have been replaced with a garage building. As a result, the impact on these neighbouring dwellings is now considered by your Officers to be acceptable.
- 5.10 The applicants have provided further information in relation to energy conservation measures (refusal reason 6) and nature conservation (refusal reason 7). Whilst the proposed energy conservation measures are not as progressive as some local residents would like, they do meet the requirements of the SPG in that several plots are orientated to take account of passive solar gain, all homes will be built with enhanced insulation that exceeds current building regulations and 5 of the large dwellings will incorporate air source heat pumps. It is also proposed to use a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) on site whereby surface water drainage will be managed so as not to overload the existing network through a combination of swales, permeable surfacing on site and an attenuation pond on land to the east of the site. In addition each dwelling will have its own water butt to reuse rain water. Your Officers, therefore, are now satisfied that this matter has been satisfactorily addressed.
- 5.11 The additional information submitted on nature conservation has led to Natural England and BBOWT withdrawing their previous objections to the proposal. As a result, refusal reason 7 has been overcome.
- 5.12 In relation to refusal reason 8, Policy H16 states that the Council will “require a variety of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of the existing and future population, and that in considering proposals for residential development it will be expected that 50% of new dwellings should have 2 bedrooms or less.” The refused scheme proposed 31% 1 & 2 bed units. Whilst the current proposal includes only 33%, within the context of the fixed density of this development and the acceptable layout now proposed, the mix of house types is considered acceptable in this case.
- 5.13 Refusal reason 9 related to affordable housing provision and lack of an even spread throughout the site. The level of provision has been agreed through the S106 Agreement and provides 77 units (i.e. a 40% provision). The affordable dwellings are identified with a \* on the site layout plan. The issue of spread has been addressed with a more even distribution in the central area, whereby plots 74 – 76, 85 – 87 and 145 – 149 are now affordable units. The affordable dwellings have also been redesigned to ensure they are visually indistinguishable from the market housing.

- 5.14 Whilst the proposed flats are all affordable, their design is considered acceptable. Furthermore, 10% of the affordable units across the site have been earmarked to meet the lifetime home standard as required by the S106 Agreement. As such, your Officers consider that the proposal now complies with the requirements of Policy H17 and the SPG. The Council's Principal Housing Enabling Officer has also confirmed that the spread and tenure mix of affordable housing proposed is acceptable.
- 5.15 In relation to refusal reason 10, negotiations are ongoing with the applicant to provide a Locally Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) on site in the southern area of public open space. An amended plan is likely to be submitted in time for the Meeting reflecting these discussions, and an update on this issue will be reported at the Meeting.
- 5.16 Concern has also been expressed that the required attenuation pond is not shown within the red line of this reserved matters application. At the outline stage, the attenuation pond was also shown to be off site, and condition 12 of the outline planning permission was imposed which prevents any work commencing on site until such time as any required off site drainage works have been undertaken. The application for the playing field and LEAP to the east of the site includes the provision of an attenuation pond. Whilst, that application has yet to be determined, this does not prevent the determination of this reserved matters application. If the playing field application is not permitted, it would be for the applicant to design an acceptable alternative scheme for off site drainage works, pursuant to condition 12.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *It is recommended that, subject to the receipt of acceptable plans showing the provision of a LEAP within the application site, reserved matters be approved subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL3 Time Limit reserved matters.*
2. *MC2 Sample Materials.*
3. *LS2 Landscaping.*
4. *Car parking layout with permeable surfacing in accordance with specified plan.*
5. *Bin storage and cycle parking to be constructed prior to first occupation.*
6. *Details of air source heat pumps to be submitted and approved, and constructed prior to first occupation.*
7. *Details of LEAP to be submitted and constructed prior to first occupation.*
8. *MC20 Amended Plans.*