

**GFA/16154/2 – Vale Housing Association
Erection of 11 affordable houses/flats
Ferngrove, Portway, Faringdon SN7 7DX**

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks permission for the demolition of an elderly person's home and its replacement with 11 affordable houses and flats on Portway in Faringdon. The site is located towards the southern end of Portway and is contained to the south by Hart Avenue which sits at a higher level to the site. The site is located outside but adjacent to the Faringdon Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The existing buildings on the site are arranged in 2 no. two-storey blocks with no on site parking although there is some on-street parking in Portway. The proposed development would be arranged in a terrace of 5 no. 2 bedroom dwellings located at right angles to the road, a terrace of 3 no. three-storey dwellings each with 3 bedrooms facing into the site towards Portway, and 3 no.2 bedroom flats arranged in a three-storey block adjacent to Hart Avenue.
- 1.3 The scheme includes a new access from the end of Portway and 15 on-site parking spaces in addition to the 7 on street spaces which currently exist.
- 1.4 This is the re-submission of a previous application for the same development which was withdrawn in order to try and address concerns over design and impact on neighbouring properties.
- 1.5 Extracts from the application drawings are at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.6 The application comes to Committee as 4 letters of objection have been received from local residents.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 A previous application for the same development on this site was withdrawn in May 2008.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 Policy H10 of the adopted Local Plan refers to new development within the 5 main settlements in the District including Faringdon, and states that it will be permitted within the defined development boundary provided it would not result in the loss of important local facilities including open space, it makes efficient use of land, and the layout, mass and design would not have a harmful impact on the character of the area.
- 3.2 Policies DC1, DC5 and DC9 refer to the design of new development, access and parking considerations, and impact on neighbouring properties.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 Faringdon Town Council has no objections to the application.
- 4.2 The County Engineer's full comments are awaited and will be reported at the Meeting, along with requirements for contributions towards Public Transport. They are re-

assessing their request made on the previous application as this failed to take into account the previous use of the site.

- 4.3 The County Developer Funding Officer has been in discussions with the applicants with regard to contributions towards local services. An update on this will be provided at the Meeting.
- 4.4 The Council's Principal Housing Enabling Officer is supportive of the scheme stating that it *"will be assisting people on the housing register and would seem to be making excellent re-use of a sheltered scheme no longer required."* She did however raise concern over the level of contributions requested by the County stating that *"It could affect viability as we are trying to achieve as many rented homes as possible which is where our greatest need is."*
- 4.5 The Council's Consultant Architect has stated that *"The visual context of this site is architecturally undistinguished and I regard what is said in the applicant's Design and Access Statement as very persuasive in demonstrating how satisfactorily the proposal responds to its context. Consequently I have no hesitation in commending the scheme to members so far as its architectural qualities are concerned."*
- 4.6 The Architects Advisory Panel recommends the proposal for approval in terms of layout, design and external appearance describing it as a "well produced scheme".
- 4.7 4 Letters of objection have been received from local residents raising the following concerns:
- The proposal will result in the loss of privacy to neighbouring properties.
 - The proposal will reduce light to neighbouring properties.
 - Lighting from the proposed dwellings will impact on neighbouring properties.
 - The rear access points to the gardens of plots 1-5 will be a safety hazard due to vehicles using this route.
 - The proposed boundary treatment is not appropriate for the area.
 - The addition of 11 dwellings to the area will result in additional noise and disturbance.
 - The proposal will lead to an unacceptable increase in traffic to the area.
 - The design does not fit in with the surrounding area.
 - The increase in height of the buildings will be over dominant particularly the 3 storey block.
 - The drainage system is not adequate for the additional housing.
 - There is no significant change from the previous application.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 The main issues to consider in determining this application are; i) the principle of residential development in this location; ii) the design and impact on the character of the area; iii) the impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties; iv) parking and access considerations; and iv) contributions towards local services and infrastructure.
- 5.2 The site is located within close proximity to the centre of Faringdon, well within the development boundary as defined in Local Plan Proposals Map in a predominantly residential area. Furthermore, the scheme replaces existing residential accommodation on the site. The principle of residential development on this site, therefore, is considered acceptable.

- 5.3 The design approach taken in the previous withdrawn application was to emulate the existing development in the vicinity of the site along Portway resulting in a rather bland and bulky form of development, particularly when viewed from Hart Avenue. The current application proposes a more contemporary approach with a mix of materials and varied roof pitches and with the main two storey terrace staggered to break up the previously continuous frontage. This provides more interest from the most prominent vantage point on Hart Avenue.
- 5.4 The Council's Consultant Architect and the Architects Panel are supportive of the current scheme in design terms. In relation to height the site is at a much lower level than Hart Avenue and Bromsgrove. From these prominent locations the proposed 3-storey building will appear 2-storey and will therefore not appear overly dominant in the street scene. A condition is recommended requiring material samples to be submitted for approval.
- 5.5 Concern has been expressed by neighbouring properties in Bromsgrove to the west of the site and Portway to the north of the site in relation to the impact of the proposal in terms of over shadowing and overlooking. Plots 1-5 have been amended since the previous application to reduce the impact on no. 20 Portway, particularly in relation to the rear windows. The rear first floor windows are now either high level or roof lights and there is a 12 metre distance so that the rear garden space of this neighbour will not be overlooked. In relation to concerns over loss of light the existing building sits immediately adjacent to the edge of the site and due south of this neighbour whereas the proposed terrace is between 9 and 12 metres from the boundary which will significantly improve light to the rear garden compared to the current situation.
- 5.6 In relation to the properties in Bromsgrove, concerns have been expressed about the impact of the 3-storey units by the occupants of nos 9, 11 and 13 which back onto the site. This part of the site is at a much lower level than these neighbouring properties which are 3 storey town houses. The current two-storey building on the site appears single storey in height due to the relative levels. The proposed three-storey terrace and flats, therefore, would appear as a two-storey building from Bromsgrove and Hart Avenue in addition to being located further away from the boundary with these neighbours than the existing building. In terms of dominance and overshadowing, your Officers do not consider that there would be any harmful impact.
- 5.7 The proposed first floor living room windows will appear at ground floor level and are set back at least a further metre into the site than the large first floor bed-sit windows in the existing building. It is not therefore considered that these would have any additional impact than the existing situation. The second floor bedroom windows will face particularly towards no. 13 Bromsgrove whose garden wraps around the side of the property. The rear windows to the flats have been amended to take account of this. However the location of the bedroom windows on the proposed town houses may have an impact and therefore further discussions are taking place with the applicant. An update on this will be provided at the Meeting.
- 5.8 Concern has also been raised over the safety of the proposed rear pedestrian access points to the gardens of plots 1 -5 which exit onto a driveway serving the rear of nos 9-13 Bromsgrove. However this is a small residential driveway generating few traffic movements from only 3 dwellings.

5.9 The proposal includes off street parking provision for 15 vehicles. Given the existence of an additional 7 on street parking spaces and the proximity of the site to the Town Centre it is considered that this provision is acceptable. As stated above, the comments from the County Engineer and contribution requirements will be reported at the Meeting.

5.10 The County Developer Funding Officer has also been in discussions with the applicants regarding contributions to local services and an update on this will also be provided at the Meeting.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *Subject to the County Engineer raising no objections and the impact of the proposal on no. 13 Bromsgrove being satisfactorily addressed, it is recommended that authority to grant planning permission be delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair subject to the completion of the S106 Agreement to secure the required contributions towards local services and facilities and subject to conditions relating to materials, drainage, slab levels, boundary treatment, landscaping, parking and access details, and external lighting.*

6.2 *In the absence of the completed Section 106 Agreement by the 13 week deadline, it is recommended that authority to refuse the application be delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair.*