

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V1130/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	17.5.2013
PARISH	GROVE
WARD MEMBER(S)	John Amys Sue Marchant Kate Precious
APPLICANT	Bellwood Projects
SITE	Walnut Tree Cottage, Townsend, Grove, Wantage, OX12 0AX
PROPOSAL	Demolition of existing cottage. Outline application for erection of four new houses with parking. (Re- submission of withdrawn application P13/V0317/O)
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	439869/190573
OFFICER	Mark Doodes

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is 0.13 ha in area at the northern end of Grove. The locality is characterised by buildings of a wide range of ages and styles of buildings, but mainly modern estate-type housing. The site presently has a single dwelling, Walnut Tree Cottage, which is an attractive cottage, positioned distinctively at right-angles to Denchworth Road. The building is in a poor state of repair.
- 1.2 Walnut Tree Cottage is not listed, but the site does abut the Grove Conservation Area. The area contains many mature trees and soft landscaping and is leafy and sub-urban in character. Of note is that planning permission exists to erect a bungalow to the rear, which is extant but not implemented (ref P10/V0586). This permitted bungalow to the rear of the site requires access and parking to be provided on land which is the subject of this application. Therefore the planning permission and this current proposal are mutually exclusive.
- 1.3 This application is brought to committee on the basis of the eight letters of objection received from neighbours. A copy of the site location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application is in outline, but with access, layout, scale and appearance all to be considered at this stage. It seeks permission to demolish Walnut Tree Cottage and construct two pairs of semi-detached, three bedroom houses and eight parking spaces with rear gardens.
- 2.2 The two pairs of semi-detached dwellings measure 11m in width, with a main roof span of 6.5 metres, and are 8m tall. They are of “cottage” proportions with a low eaves and chequered dormers to the front. Relatively generous rear gardens are provided, by modern standards, approximately 20 metres deep.
- 2.3 A copy of the relevant plans and elevations are **attached** at appendix 2.

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Grove Parish Council – “No objection”

3.2 Neighbours – eight letters of objection have been received. The grounds for objection are as follows:-

- loss of one of the oldest buildings in the area, an attractive cottage, and harm to the character of the area from the proposed houses
- increased traffic and potential on-street parking congestion
- harm to residential amenities through loss of light
- surface water drainage problems
- harm to bats which use the existing cottage.

3.3 Highways Liaison Officer - No objection subject to conditions.

3.4 Conservation Officer Vale – The existing cottage, although not of listable quality by virtue of its construction, history or community use, is a non-designated heritage asset. In accordance with paragraph 135 of the NPPF, the loss of the asset must be weighed in the balance, in accordance with the scale of harm to, and importance of, the heritage asset. As the current proposal is for development that is an appropriate response to its surroundings, the benefits of the proposal are now considered to outweigh the argument to retain the non-designated heritage asset.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 [P13/V0317/O](#) - Withdrawn (29/04/2013)

Outline application for demolition of existing cottage and erection of five new houses with parking.

[P12/V1754/O](#) – Withdrawn (05/12/2012)

Proposed development of 5 new houses and parking, and demolition of existing cottage.

[P10/V0586](#) - Approved (13/05/2010)

Erection of a two bedroom, single storey dwelling

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

DC1 - Design

DC14 - Surface Water Flood Risk

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

H10 - Development in the Five Main Settlements

H15 - Housing Densities

Adopted Residential Design Guide 2009

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Walnut Tree Cottage is an attractive building. However, of significant note is that it is not listed and it is not within the conservation area. Consequently the cottage can be demolished without the need for permission. A heritage assessment was submitted with

the application, and assessed by conservation officer, who reached the conclusion that the cottage was not of substantial enough merit to warrant listing.

- 6.2 Moving on to the principle of development. Grove is one of the five larger settlements in the District and therefore a wide range of education, cultural, public transport, medical, retail and employment sites exist within short reach of the site. The NPPF gives a strong presumption in favour of development in sustainable locations. Based on the above assessment, the site is considered to be in a sustainable location.
- 6.3 In terms of the specific proposals, the key issues are the impact on the character and appearance of the area, the impact upon neighbours, parking and the amenity levels of the prospective occupants. Dealing with the first issue, the proposed dwellings are sited in accordance with the established set-back from the main road that generally prevails. Parking to the front of the dwellings is a characteristic that also prevails locally. The proposed parking area will be softened in appearance by new planting – landscaping proposals are a reserved matter to this outline application. There are a number of trees on the site, but a tree survey has established that these are of generally poor quality, many having been topped to remain clear of overhead power lines. Consequently, the loss of these trees is not considered to be sufficient reason to resist the proposal. The issue of the use of the existing building by bats was being investigated at the time of writing the report and an update on this will be provided to the meeting. Based on the above assessment, and subject to any findings regarding bats, the impact of the proposal on the area is considered to be satisfactory and therefore the works are considered to accord with policy DC1 of the adopted local plan.
- 6.4 The density of the proposals will be approximately 31 dwellings per hectare which is considered to be acceptable in this sub-urban setting. At this density, the land in question is considered by officers to be efficiently used, particularly when taking into account the relatively sustainable location. Therefore, the proposals are considered to be broadly acceptable and compliant with policy H15 of the local plan.
- 6.5 As the proposed dwellings are aligned with the general grain of the area, and in light of the length of the proposed rear gardens, the proposals are not considered to result in harm from overlooking or loss of light. The objections of neighbours have been considered and are noted but all amenity matters are considered acceptable. The separation distances are considerably above minimum standards, and any impact is further mitigated by the retention of planting and trees to the rear of the site.
- 6.6 In terms of highways implications, the application has been carefully assessed by the county highways officers. The re-located access has acceptable visibility, and the proposed level of parking, two vehicles per dwelling, meets the council's adopted standards. The county highways officer has no objections subject to conditions. Therefore, the application is considered to accord with policy DC5 of the adopted local plan.
- 6.7 Drainage and sewage matters can be controlled by condition using a suitable pre-commencement condition. The area does not have a history of flooding. Therefore the application is considered, by the use of suitable conditions, to accord with policy DC14 of the local plan.
- 7.0 **CONCLUSION**
- 7.1 The application is considered to be a suitable and efficient use of land in the area. The loss of the non-designated heritage asset, Walnut Tree Cottage, is considered to be insufficient when weighed against the public benefits of the scheme now proposed. The proposed dwellings accord with the character and appearance of the area, possessing

generous rear gardens and adequate parking, and do not cause harm to any neighbouring dwellings. The proposal therefore accords with the relevant policies of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

Subject to confirmation that no harm will arise to protected bat species, it is recommended that planning permission is granted, subject to the following conditions:

- 1 : TL2 Commencement - outline planning permission
- 2 : OL3 – Submission of reserved matters (landscaping)
- 3 : Approved plans
- 4 : Surface water drainage works (details required)
- 5 : Foul drainage works (details required)
- 6 : HY3 - Visibility splays retained
- 7 : HY6[1] - Access, parking & turning in accordance with plans.
- 8 : HY17 - Closure of existing access
- 9 : HY19 - No drainage to highway

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