

West Area Planning Committee

12 May 2015

Application Number: 15/00035/FUL

Decision Due by: 11th March 2015

Proposal: Conversion of existing flats into 1 x 4 bedroom and 1 x 6 bedroom dwelling houses (Use Class C3). Demolition of existing rear extension and erection of part single, part two storey rear extension and basement extension. Insertion of 5 No rooflights in association with loft conversion. Erection of porch to side elevation. Formation of 1 No front lightwell and 1 No rear lightwell and installation of iron railings. Creation of 2 new on-site car parking spaces. (Amended plans) (Amended description)

Site Address: 14 Polstead Road, **Appendix 1.**

Ward: St Margarets Ward

Agent: Riach Architects

Applicant: Polstead Road Limited

Application Called in – by Councillors – Wade, Goddard, Gotch and Wilkonson for the following reasons

1. Adverse impact to character and appearance of the dwelling and conservation area
2. Adverse impacts to amenity of no. 16 Polstead Road
3. On-street parking demand and loss of on-street parking spaces
4. Insufficient information regarding landscaping, maintenance of the dwelling, boundary wall and outbuilding
5. Concerns regarding choice of materials

Recommendation:

APPLICATION BE APPROVED

For the following reasons:

- 1 The development proposed is considered to form an appropriate visual relationship with surrounding development without giving rise to harm to neighbouring residential accommodation. The dwellings would provide good quality residential accommodation for future occupiers whilst improving the garden areas and not compromising the safety of users of the public highway. Whilst the amalgamation of three units into two dwellings would not ordinarily be supported as contrary to policy HP1 of the Sites and Housing Plan, in this case the balance of advantage is considered to lie with permitting the

development, improving the physical fabric of the buildings and increasing the local supply of houses suitable for family occupation. The development would in other terms comply with the provisions of the Oxford Local Plan, Sites and Housing Plan and Core Strategy.

- 2 Officers have considered carefully all objections to these proposals. Officers have come to the view, for the detailed reasons set out in the officers report, that the objections do not amount, individually or cumulatively, to a reason for refusal and that all the issues that have been raised have been adequately addressed and the relevant bodies consulted.

subject to the following conditions, which have been imposed for the reasons stated:-

- 1 Development begun within time limit
- 2 Develop in accordance with approved plans
- 3 Materials in the conservation area
- 4 Landscape carry out by completion
- 5 Tree Protection Plan (TPP) 1
- 6 Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) 1
- 7 Landscape hard surface design - tree roots
- 8 Landscape underground services - tree roots
- 9 Boundary treatment
- 10 Traffic Regulation Order
- 11 Driveway construction
- 12 Bin and cycle store details

Community Infrastructure Levy.

The proposed development would be liable for monetary contributions of £14,137.90 in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Main Planning Policies.

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

- CP1 - Development Proposals
- CP6 - Efficient Use of Land & Density
- CP8 - Design Development to Relate to its Context
- CP10 - Siting Development to Meet Functional Needs
- CP11 - Landscape Design
- HE7 - Conservation Areas
- NE15 - Loss of Trees and Hedgerows
- NE16 - Protected Trees

Core Strategy

- CS18 - Urban design, town character, historic environment

Sites and Housing Plan

- MP1 - Model Policy
- HP1 - Change of use from existing homes
- HP2 - Accessible and Adaptable Homes

HP9 - Design, Character and Context
HP11 - Low Carbon Homes
HP12 - Indoor Space
HP13 - Outdoor Space
HP14 - Privacy and Daylight
HP15 - Residential cycle parking
HP16 - Residential car parking

Other Material Considerations:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Planning Practice Guidance
- This application falls within the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area
- Balance of Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Relevant Site History:

There is no site history relevant to the subject application.

Public Consultation.

Representations Received:

14 representations were received following the initial round of consultation, raising the following concerns in objection to the proposed development:

- Character of the dwelling and conservation area
- Overdevelopment
- Potential loss of the summerhouse
- Height
- Materials
- Privacy
- Daylight access
- Noise
- Light
- Cooking odours
- Trees and landscaping
- On-street and off-street parking
- Highway safety
- Impacts during construction
- Insufficient information

Oxford Preservation Trust

- Demolition of original rear wing
- Materials
- Partial demolition of the wall
- New car space in garden

The Victorian Group of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society

- Loss of open amenity space on Polstead Road frontage
- Propose retention of wall and replacement railings.

St Margaret's Area Society Committee

- Location of car space and partial demolition of the wall
- Protection of the summerhouse at the rear
- Insufficient information regarding bin/cycle storage
- Fenestration of extension

Chalfont Road Resident's Association

- On-street parking provision

One representation was received in support of the proposed development subject to the use of appropriate and sympathetic materials

Four representations were received following the submission of amended plans and a subsequent period of community consultation. The representations raised similar concerns to those of previous submissions with respect to the amended plans.

Statutory Consultees:

- Highways Authority: Parking: The development lies within a Controlled Parking Zone with a maximum of two permits per dwelling. The development proposes to provide parking spaces without identifying how many, for dwellings of 4+ bedrooms they ought to provide 2 spaces per dwelling. Access: The development proposes to provide 2 vehicular accesses from Chalfont Road. Conditions are recommended should the application be granted planning permission.
- Thames Water: Thames Water would advise that with regard to sewerage infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application. On the basis of information provided, Thames Water would advise that with regard to water infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application.

Determining Issues:

- Principle of Conversion
- Design and conservation
- Landscaping
- Amenity
- Highways, parking and access

Officers Assessment:

Site Description

1. No. 14 is a three storey semi-detached dwelling with basement located on the northwest corner of Polstead and Chalfont Roads. The Victorian building sits on a rectangular site with a verdant setting with one car space accessed from Chalfont Road. A Blue Cedar located on the southeast corner of the site is protected by a Tree Protection Order. A small outbuilding is located within the northwest corner of the plot.

2. Currently the building is subdivided with one x three bedroom dwelling on the ground floor (and basement) and two x two bedroom dwellings on the first and second floor respectively. The flats have access to communal garden space to the rear but do not possess individual gardens.
3. The surrounding area is characterised by residential development of a similar physical form and style. No. 16 Polstead Road adjoining the application site to the west is occupied by a French school. The application site is located within the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area.

Proposed Development

4. Planning permission is sought for the amalgamation of three flats into two dwellings, a part single part two storey wing extension to the rear, basement extension, roof lights, new porch, minor internal and external alterations, new vehicular access, car parking space from Chalfont Road and landscaping.
5. The proposed two storey extension would replace an existing single storey outrigger to accommodate a kitchen/diner at ground floor and bedroom at first floor. The extension would be between 6.6 metres and 6.8 metres deep x 5 metres wide at ground floor and 5.7 metres deep x 4 metres wide at first floor level. The extension would be 6.8 metres high with a hip roof and setback 6 metres from Chalfont Road, and 5 metres from no. 16 Polstead Road at ground level and 6 metres at first floor level. The extension would generally be built in materials matching the existing dwelling with the exception of glazed bi-fold doors on the ground floor west and north elevations which would utilise aluminium frames.
6. The existing basement would be extended in line with the original footprint of the building to accommodate living areas for each dwelling. The basement extension would adjoin the property boundary with no. 16 Polstead Road.
7. The amalgamation of the dwellings would result in one x 4 bedroom family home and 1 x 6 bedroom family home, a net-loss of one self-contained dwelling. Each dwelling would have separate ground floor access, private amenity space and benefit from one car space with a second vehicular access provided from Chalfont Road.
8. Roof lights are proposed on the front and rear roof elevations to facilitate the loft conversion and a new light-well would be constructed to provide light to the basement. The existing boundary wall to Chalfont Road would be partially demolished to provide vehicular access with the wall reinstated and restored in other sections on Chalfont and Polstead Roads.
9. As the planning application has evolved amended plans were received on 25th March 2015 reducing the height of the proposed two storey extension and relocating the proposed car space to Polstead Road. Further amended plans were submitted on 21st April 2015 returning the proposed car space to Chalfont Road, providing pedestrian access from Polstead Road and reinstating traditional

railings.

Principle of Conversion

10. Policy HP1 of the Sites and Housing Plan seeks to oppose the net loss of residential accommodation. The amalgamation of three units into two would therefore result in the net-loss of one dwelling contrary to policy.
11. A primary aim of policy HP1 is to protect the number of houses within the City and not undermine the 5-year supply of housing; to provide an adequate level of internal and external amenity to occupants; and to protect the amenity of surrounding land uses. The policy reinforces the provisions of chapter 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
12. Notwithstanding the objectives and provisions of policy HP1, internal alterations with the effect of amalgamating dwellings would not ordinarily be subject to a planning application as the impacts to the surrounding area would be negligible. In any event in this case the existing building, consistent with the surrounding area, historically served as a single family home before being converted into self-contained units. Currently two flats not suitable for family accommodation exist on the site together with a further 3 bed flat. None of the flats have individual gardens, and only one car parking space is present. In the proposed development two large family homes would be created, each with its own private amenity space, one car parking space each and cycle storage. Officers regard this as an improvement in the provision of amenities compared current arrangements. The development would also restore the facade of the building, the boundary wall and be supported by landscaping works, enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.
13. Moreover the Balance of Housing SPD identifies the St Margaret's Neighbourhood area as requiring the protection of family homes to maintain an appropriate mix of dwellings within the area. The proposed development would result in the net gain of one family dwelling and is consistent with that aim.
14. In summary therefore, as the development would result in the provision of 2 good quality family homes in an area identified for their provision; would restore the fabric of the currently unkempt and run down buildings and garden; and would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area, then on balance officers are prepared to accept the loss of a single residential unit on this occasion and would not regard the proposal as undermining the provisions of policy HP1 of the Sites and Housing Plan.

Design and Conservation

15. The North Oxford Victorian Suburb conservation area is characterised by wide roads, large red and yellow brick villas in a verdant setting. Polstead and Chalfont Roads are consistent with this Victorian era development, with a characteristic scale and appearance that typifies the neo-gothic style of the time.
16. Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation) Act

1990 require local authorities to have special regard to the desirability to preserve and enhance listed buildings, conservation areas and their settings, which means that considerable weight and importance should be given to the desirability of preserving designated heritage assets and their settings.

17. A key message in the NPPF is also that the historic environment is a finite and irreplaceable resource and the conservation of heritage assets should be a high priority. Development that causes harm to a heritage asset or its setting should be avoided unless there is a public benefit to outweigh that harm. The NPPF states therefore that *'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of a heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification'*.
18. The policies of the local plan and core strategy support this approach seeking to ensure development is managed effectively to ensure it will be sustainable.
19. The application site is located a prominent corner position but is currently unkempt with overgrown landscaping, with the property appearing to be unmaintained. The proposed works would seek to refurbish and extend the dwelling, retain the outbuilding to the rear and rehabilitate the landscaping, enhancing its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
20. The text which follows considers the various built elements of the development individually.
21. The demolition of the single storey outrigger and the proposed two storey extension would result in a significant alteration to the north and east elevations of the dwelling and its relationship with the street scene. However, the scale and form of the extension would generally be subservient to the main structures and in keeping with that of the existing dwelling.
22. The hip roof would also be an appropriate form to limit the bulk of the proposed extension and would not detract from the predominant gable roof form of the dwelling and the surrounding area. The materials, fenestration and architectural detailing, such as the finials on the roof and consistent pattern and form of the windows, would be welcome sympathetic features of the extension and would be consistent with the character and appearance of the conservation area. The ridge line and eaves have been reduced in height in response to concerns raised in submissions without resulting in a squat form.
23. The expansive contemporary glazing on the north and west elevation of the ground floor would be obscured from public view by its orientation and the boundary wall to Chalfont Road. The glazing is not so prominent as to detract from the building and its setting in the conservation area. A condition could be required for materials to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.

24. The form and scale of the proposed porch would be in keeping with the existing dwelling and would delineate between the entrances of the two dwellings. Adjacent to the pedestrian entrances to the dwellings would be the bin and cycle storage areas. While no architectural details have been provided with the application, a condition could be recommended requiring this information to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.
25. The basement would be enlarged to occupy an area similar to the existing footprint of the dwelling, approximately doubling its size. The basement would therefore align with the property boundary with no. 16 Polstead Road. The proposed basement would not be so large as to detract from the character of the dwelling and would not constitute overdevelopment. It would provide an extension to the living areas of the proposed dwellings and would require minimal loss of garden areas to accommodate light wells. As such the proposal would not adversely impact the character and appearance of the host dwelling and conservation area.
26. The plot would comfortably accommodate the proposed rear extension, with sufficient setbacks to plot boundaries so as to provide adequate curtilage for landscaping. The proposed extension would therefore not result in an overbearing relationship with no. 16 Polstead Road and the public domain on Chalfont Road.
27. Loft conversions and roof lights are a minor form of development that are an efficient way to maximise floor space and are evident within the street scene, including at no. 16 Polstead Road. The scale of the existing building and the dispersion of the proposed roof lights would result in minimal adverse impact to the roof scape.
28. The existing low wall and opening fronting Polstead Road would be renovated and on the south - east elevation to Chalfont Road the wall partially reinstated. Traditional railings reflecting the trellis design that is most common in North Oxford and of the appropriate era would be reinstated in accordance with the North Oxford Railings Guide to enhance the contribution of the site to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The opening to the boundary wall and provision of a gate near to no. 1 Chalfont Road to provide vehicular access would not compromise the character and appearance of the site and its setting within the conservation area.
29. Overall considerable weight has been given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the site and its setting within the conservation area. It is concluded that there would be no harm to heritage assets or their settings. The proposed development is of an appropriate form and scale, consistent with the provisions of the NPPF, policies CP1, CP8, CP10 and HE7 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, CS18 of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026 and HP9 of the Sites and Housing Plan 2011-2026 and is supported accordingly.

Landscaping

30. A landscape plan was submitted with the application identifying new hedges adjoining the boundary and the removal of nine trees (T4, T5, T6, T7, T11, T13 and T16-18). The nine trees scheduled for removal are not considered to contribute to the amenity of the conservation area and as such their removal would be acceptable. Further the site is currently overburdened with trees and as such their removal will improve the health and visual amenity of those remaining. The Blue Cedar located on the southeast corner of the site would be retained and with the exception of works to the boundary wall would not be adversely affected by the proposed work. Nevertheless a condition could be recommended requiring details of its protection during construction.
31. The works to the boundary walls and rehabilitating the landscape would enhance the contribution of the site to the character and appearance of the conservation area and is supported. The proposed development would therefore comply with the provisions the NPPF and policies NE15 and NE16 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.

Amenity

32. The proposed dwellings provide generous indoor floor space for good quality family homes in accordance with policy HP12 of the Sites and Housing Plan. Sufficient outdoor space equivalent to the internal living areas would be provided for each dwelling to satisfy policies CP10 of the Local Plan and HP13 of the Sites and Housing Plan: the four bedroom dwelling would be provided amenity space to the front and side of the building and the six bedroom dwelling provided the amenity space to the rear of the dwelling. The living areas would benefit from good daylight access and cross ventilation. Windows and doors are sited to ensure adequate privacy for occupants in compliance with policy HP14 of the Sites and Housing Plan. Sufficient areas for bin stores are identified on the proposed plans.
33. A statement with regard to compliance with policy HP2 – Accessible and Adaptable Homes of the Sites and Housing Plan was submitted on 24th April 2015. The statement demonstrates that the proposed dwellings would generally comply with the requirements of the policy and that the dwellings could be adapted for accessibility purposes.
34. As a result of its scale and siting, the proposed extension would not adversely impact daylight access, outlook or acoustic privacy of neighbouring properties. Neighbouring properties could expect some amount of noise and cooking odours as in any residential environment.
35. In terms of relationships with neighbouring properties, views from first floor windows of no. 16 Polstead Road to the side facing ground floor windows of the extension would be oblique and therefore reasonable. Views to other surrounding properties would be an acceptable distance to maintain privacy. The depth of the extensions would not intrude within a 45-degree horizontal and 25-degree vertical line of visibility from the existing rear facing ground floor windows of no. 16

Polstead Road. The proposed development would therefore comply with the provisions of policy HP14 and by extension appendix 7 of the Sites and Housing Plan.

Highways, Parking and Access.

36. The site currently accommodates one off-street parking spot accessed from Chalfont Road. The site is located within a Controlled Parking Zone and in accordance with the parking permit restrictions applying in the area each dwelling would be eligible for two on-street parking permits for use in the surrounding.
37. The existing vehicle cross over from Chalfont Road would be deleted and two driveways created further along Chalfont Road. The proposal would result in the net-loss of one on-street parking space, and net-gain one off-street parking space. The net-loss of one on-street parking space would therefore be outweighed by the net-loss in demand for on-street parking.
38. The Highways Authority has recommended that the dwellings each be provided two car spaces on site in accordance with the maximum provisions of policy HP16 and by extension appendix 8 of the Sites and Housing Plan. Variations to the maximum parking provisions are acceptable where the site is within a Controlled Parking Zone with good transport links and facilities nearby. As the provision of up to four parking spaces would detract from the verdant character and appearance of the site in any event, then officers are prepared to accept one parking space only per dwelling in this case.
39. The proposed cycle stores would be of sufficient size, accommodating two cycles, and siting to meet the needs of occupants. A condition could be recommended to require details of the cycle storage to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works. As such the proposal would be consistent with the requirements of policy HP15 of the Sites and Housing Plan.

Conclusion

40. The application entails renovating this unkempt and down at heel property and bringing forward two good quality residential properties suitable for family occupation. The application is supported accordingly.

Human Rights Act 1998

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions. Officers have considered the potential interference with the rights of the owners/occupiers of surrounding properties under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Act and consider that it is proportionate.

Officers have also considered the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol caused by imposing conditions. Officers consider that the conditions are necessary to protect the rights and

freedoms of others and to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest. The interference is therefore justifiable and proportionate.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

Contact Officer: David Zabell

Extension: 2160

Date: 06th May 2015

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