

## West Area Planning Committee

5<sup>th</sup> January 2016

**Application Number:** 15/03189/FUL

**Decision Due by:** 28<sup>th</sup> December 2015

**Proposal:** Demolition of existing electrical substation. Erection of 2 x 3-bed semi-detached dwellinghouses (Use Class C3). Provision of private amenity space, bin and cycle store and parking for 4No. vehicles.

**Site Address:** Electricity Sub Station Adjacent 299C Iffley Road Oxford Oxfordshire

**Ward:** Iffley Fields Ward

**Agent:** Bidwells LLP

**Applicant:** SSE Plc

**Application Called in –** by Councillors Tanner, Pressel and Price for the following reasons – Concerns about access arrangements

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### Recommendation:

The West Area Planning Committee is recommended to approve planning permission subject to conditions, for the following reasons:

For the following reasons:

- 1 The proposed two dwellings are acceptable in terms of their design, siting, layout and appearance. It is considered that the proposed development would provide an acceptable quality of accommodation, including the provision of outdoor amenity space, bicycle storage and screened refuse and recycling provision. The proposed development would make better use of an existing redundant site and therefore represents the opportunity to make more efficient use of land, a principle supported by Policy CP6 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016. It is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of surrounding residential occupiers and would not have an adverse impact on highway safety. Adequate measures dealing with surface water drainage and biodiversity can be addressed by condition. On this basis the development is acceptable in the context of Policy CP1, CP6, CP8, CP10 and CP11 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, Policy CS2, CS11, CS12, CS17, CS18 and CS23 of the Core Strategy (2011) and Policies HP2, HP9, HP12, HP13, HP14, HP15 and HP16 of the Sites and Housing Plan (2013) subject to the conditions set out below.
- 2 The Council considers that the proposal accords with the policies of the development plan as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other

material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. Any material harm that the development would otherwise give rise to can be offset by the conditions imposed.

- 3 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.

### **Conditions**

- 1 Development begun within time limit
- 2 Develop in accordance with approved plans
- 3 Materials
- 4 Design - no additions to dwelling
- 5 Surface water management
- 6 Cycle Stores
- 7 Landscaping
- 8 Parking area
- 9 Obscure Glazing
- 10 No side windows
- 11 Boundary treatments
- 12 Contaminated land condition
- 13 No access to Boundary Brook Road
- 14 Biodiversity

### **Principal 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

### Core Strategy

**CS2\_** - Previously developed and greenfield land

**CS9\_** - Energy and natural resources

**CS10\_** - Waste and recycling

**CS11\_** - Flooding

**CS12\_** - Biodiversity

**CS17\_** - Infrastructure and developer contributions

**CS18\_** - Urban design, town character, historic environments

**CS23\_** - Mix of housing

### Sites and Housing Plan

**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

**Public Consultation**

Statutory Consultees Etc.

Highways: Objections, insufficient evidence to show that four vehicles could park in the proposed parking area and manoeuvre. Visibility splays?

Third Parties

303 Iffley Road, Objections:

- Loss of privacy
- Impact on character
- Noise and disturbance
- Impact on car parking
- Impact on light

1 Boundary Brook Road, Comments:

- Concern that no vehicle access should be provided onto Boundary Brook Road.
- Concern that no vegetation should be lost at rear

**Relevant Site History:**

None

**Site Description**

The application site encompasses an existing electricity substation situated on a cul-de-sac off of Iffley Road, the cul-de-sac serves a small close of properties (299a-299c Iffley Road) that lie to the rear of 299 Iffley Road. To the south of the application site is 303 Iffley Road. To the immediate east of the application site is a verge and driveway that serves 2 Howard Street opening out onto Boundary Brook Road.

The existing site currently contains vegetation and a brick sub-station building; the building appears to date from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. There is an existing access onto the site, with a dropped kerb and gates (though during the Officer's site visit this did not appear to be regularly used). The application site area is approximately 0.1ha in size.

The surrounding area has a residential character, with mainly two storey dwelling-

houses in the immediate vicinity of the application site. Although the 1930s houses to the south of the application site have large gardens the adjacent properties in the cul-de-sac have shorter gardens of approximately 7m.

There are a variety of building materials used in the vicinity of the application site, including brick and render for walls and plain concrete tiles for roofs. The neighbouring properties to the north of the application site (299a-299c Iffley Road) are constructed from pale bricks with tiled roofs.

The application site is not within a conservation area.

### **Proposed Development**

It is proposed to erect a pair of semi-detached two three bedroom dwelling-houses. The proposed dwellings would be set back from the existing dropped kerb access by approximately 6m and extend back into the plot 8.5m, aligned so that they are facing towards Iffley Road at the same orientation as No. 303 Iffley Road. The two dwellings would be staggered so that the southerly of the two dwellings would be 2m forward of the other proposed house. The proposed dwellings would two storey with a loft conversion, providing accommodation over three floors. A small single storey element is proposed at the front that would be used as a ground floor WC.

The proposed dwellings have an identical internal layout.

The front elevations of the proposed dwellings include triangular shaped projecting windows at the first floor level. One half of each of the windows, the halves facing towards 303 Iffley Road would be obscure glazed.

Each dwelling is proposed to have a small front garden with a shared parking area in front; extending out along the cul-de-sac towards Iffley Road. The proposed parking area would provide car parking for four cars, with a tandem parking area. The proposed parking area would be accessed using the existing dropped kerb and access. Each of the proposed dwellings would benefit from a rear garden, the rear gardens would be approximately 7m and 5m in length respectively.

The dwellings are proposed to be constructed from brick and render, with a concrete tiled roof.

### **Issues:**

Officers have identified the following key issues relevant to the determination of this application:

- Principle of development
- Design
- Living conditions
- Impact on neighbours
- Trees
- Access and car parking
- Flooding and surface water drainage
- Biodiversity

## **Officers Assessment:**

### **Principle of Development**

#### Principle of Development

1. The application site is considered to be previously developed land; being currently occupied by a redundant substation. Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy, together with the NPPF requires that the majority of new development will take place on previously developed land; particularly in sustainable locations. Officers consider that on this basis, the proposed development is acceptable in principle.
2. In addition to the above, Officers have been mindful of the provisions of Policy CP6 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 which seeks to encourage the greater efficiency of land use, subject to design and other considerations. In this case, the proposed development would make a more efficient use of an existing site and this provides greater support for the principle of development in this location.

#### Balance of Dwellings

3. The proposed development relates to the erection of two units which falls below the threshold identified in the Balance of Dwellings where a specific mix of dwellings is required.

### **Design**

#### Existing Building

4. The existing building on the site is proposed to be demolished. The existing building is a single storey brick building. Despite its utility purpose, the materials used in its construction and the design of the building are surprisingly high quality. The design interest of the building stems from its appearance which has hall marks of a building that dates from the 1920s or 1930s; substations of this design can be found throughout Oxford (including an identical example on Garsington Road in Cowley). Despite the elements of the building which are of interest, the building is redundant and Officers recommend that the demolition of the building would be acceptable.

#### Impact on Street scene

5. Officers consider that the proposed siting of the development within the plot and relative to surrounding residential properties means that it would form an appropriate relationship within the street scene. The proposal to stagger the properties relative to the road would decrease their overall bulk and prominence in the street scene. Mature vegetation to the rear of the site would partially screen the development from Boundary Brook Road.

#### Materials

6. Further to the above, Officers consider that the proposed material, which

include a pallet of materials that are similar to surrounding properties are likely to be acceptable and allow the proposed development to harmonise effectively with the surrounding built environment. Despite this, a condition has been included in the recommendation to ensure that the exact types of materials used are submitted to the Council for approval prior to the commencement of the development.

#### Height of Buildings

7. The proposed dwellings would have a similar overall height to the adjacent properties within the cul-de-sac and would be slightly lower than the adjacent house on Iffley Road (No. 303 Iffley Road).

### **Living Conditions**

#### Size of Dwellings

8. The proposed dwellings would have an approximate internal floor area of approximately 85m<sup>2</sup>, which would be acceptable for a family dwelling in the context of Policy HP12 of the Sites and Housing Plan (2013). In reaching this view, Officers have also been mindful of the quality of internal floor area proposed, which includes sufficient light and ventilation from windows. The windows serving the first floor bedrooms at the front of the dwellings have sections of obscure glass but also have transparent glass such that these rooms would have access to light and ventilation.

#### Lifetime Homes Standards

9. It is a requirement of Policy HP2 of the Sites and Housing Plan (2013) that new dwellings meet the requirements of Lifetime Homes Standards. Officers consider that the proposed new dwellings would meet many of the requirements of Lifetime Homes Standards, particularly relating to the internal layout of the properties which have a simple internal layout that would make them more accessible. There is also proposed to be parking that would be near to the entrances to the dwellings and a ground floor WC that would make the properties more suitable for occupiers with reduced mobility.

#### Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Homes

10. No information has been provided in relation to low carbon homes or renewable energy measures. The proposed development falls below the threshold identified in Policy HP11 of the Site and Housing Plan (2013) where there is a specific requirement for on-site generation.

#### Outdoor Space

11. Officers consider that the proposed rear gardens for the dwellings would be acceptable in terms of their overall size. The proposed gardens are shorter than would normally be acceptable in general urban design terms but there are not properties to the rear of the application site which would impact upon the privacy of the proposed rear gardens. Additionally, the shorter length garden of the northern most dwelling (which is only 5m in length) has a wider garden (9m at its widest point) which would overcome

some of the deficiency in the length of the garden. Officers are also minded to consider that the proposed front garden would provide some outdoor amenity benefit for the occupiers of the proposed dwellings. In summary, Officers consider that the proposed amenity spaces would enable the development to meet the requirements of Policy HP13 of the Sites and Housing Plan (2013).

12. Officers have been mindful of the amount of outdoor amenity space that has been proposed. Officers consider that if extensions were made to the proposed dwelling-houses then this could result in a deficiency in amenity space which would not be acceptable. It is also considered that given the constrained nature of the site, other extensions may have an adverse impact in terms of the visual appearance of the dwellings and on the amenity of neighbouring properties. As a result, a condition has been included with the recommendation that would remove permitted development rights (relating to extensions, porches, outbuildings, dormers and rooflights).

#### Boundary Treatments

13. Officers have recommended including a condition to require the submission of boundary treatment details prior to the commencement of the proposed development to ensure that the rear garden amenity spaces are sufficiently private.

#### **Impact on Neighbours**

##### Impact on Privacy

14. Officers consider that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers. Despite the short length of the gardens, there would be no overlooking from the rear windows of the upper floors of the proposed dwellings into the garden of surrounding occupiers; there are no existing properties to the immediate rear of the application site (only a driveway and Boundary Brook Road).
15. The proposed first floor windows at the front of the dwellings would otherwise provide some overlooking into No. 303 Iffley Road but the design of the windows, which form a triangular shape on plan, with panes of glass facing out at 45 degree angles away from the plane of the front of the house, address the potential overlooking. The proposed panes of glass forming one half of each of those windows and facing towards No. 303 Iffley Road would be obscure glazed. Officers have recommended that a condition be included to ensure that these windows remain obscure glazed and are non-opening below a height of 1.7m when measured from the finished floor level.
16. There are no side windows proposed on the dwelling-houses; a condition has been included to ensure that there would be no additional side windows that could be installed as permitted development.

### Impact on Light

17. Officers have considered the impact of the proposed development on light conditions for surrounding properties. The nearest dwellings to the proposed development would be No.s 303 and 299c Iffley Road.
18. In relation to No. 303 Iffley Road, the proposed development would be situated behind the rear of that property and approximately 11m from that dwelling. This distance would ensure that the rear windows of No. 299c Iffley Road would not be overshadowed by the proposed two storey dwellings. Additionally, the proposed dwellings would be to the north of 299c Iffley Road which would further reduce the impact on light, particularly on the garden of that property.
19. No. 299c Iffley Road lies in close proximity to the proposed dwellings. Despite being orientated at an angle to that property, the proposed dwellings would relate well to the house in terms of ensuring that there would be no impact on light to the dwelling. The proposed dwellings would extend only 1m beyond the rear elevation of No. 299c Iffley Road and are set back behind the front of the property. The result is that there would be no loss of light to the front or rear elevations of 299c Iffley Road from the presence of the new dwellings. There are no windows on the side elevation of 299c Iffley Road.

### Visual Impact

20. Officers have been mindful of the visual intrusion of the proposed development, particularly when viewed from No. 303 Iffley Road. The current building on the site is a single storey building and therefore has a very limited presence when viewed from neighbouring rear gardens. Officers consider that the proposed design of the development coupled with its siting within the plot and orientation of the dwellings reduce their visual impact. Officers have also included a condition in the recommendation to ensure that some landscaping is provided to further soften the impact of the proposed development.

## **Trees and Landscaping**

### Existing Vegetation

21. There is existing vegetation around the edge of the site, most of this vegetation lies outside of the application site but would contribute towards partially screening the development.
22. None of the trees on the application site are protected.

### Landscaping

23. As previously suggested, Officers have recommended condition that would require landscaping to be provided by condition. It is recommended that this should address two key aspects of the proposed development. Firstly, it should ensure that the appearance of the development is softened when viewed from neighboring properties and the street scene. Also, landscaping should provide a border to the front of the site, specifically around the car



parking area to ensure that the front aspect of the development contributes positively to the street scene.

### **Access and Parking**

#### Access

24. It is proposed to make use of the existing access onto the site. This would be acceptable as it opens onto the cul-de-sac where there would be very low vehicle speeds.
25. There are no proposals to create a new vehicular access from the application site onto Boundary Brook Road. However, Officers have been mindful that this could work could be carried out as permitted development in the future if the occupiers of the dwelling-houses were minded to create a new access. As a result, Officers have recommended a condition be included that would remove the permitted development right for creating new accesses (Part 2, Class B of the GPDO).

#### Parking

26. It is proposed to provide car parking at the front of the application site. Four car parking spaces are proposed that would provide two spaces for each dwelling. This would meet the required parking provision for the dwellings as set out in Policy HP16 of the Sites and Housing Plan.

#### Cycle Storage

27. Cycle stores are proposed in the rear gardens of the proposed dwellings. The stores would be covered and secure, providing sufficient cycle storage for occupiers of the dwelling-houses. There are side accesses to the rear gardens included in the site plan which would enable a bicycle to be taken to the stores from the highway without going through the house. Officers have recommended a condition that would require the cycle stores to be provided prior to first occupation. The proposed cycle stores would also provide an area where refuse and recycling bins would be screened.

### **Flooding and surface water drainage**

#### Flooding

28. The application site does not lie in area of high flood risk as defined by the environment agency flood maps.
29. Despite not being in an area of high fluvial flood risk, the application site does lie in area of defined surface water flood risk. This is addressed below.

#### Surface Water Drainage

30. No details have been provided in relation to the surface water drainage of the proposed development. Despite this, Officers have considered that there is adequate space on the site to provide adequate surface water management. Officers have recommended that a condition be included that would ensure that there would be the provision of drains and soakaways on the site to deal with surface water; additionally the proposed parking area will be required to be constructed of a permeable material or drain onto permeable land within the application site in order that the development meets the requirements of

SUDs and Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy (2011).

**Biodiversity**

31. No details have been provided of biodiversity enhancement measures. Officers consider that there would be an opportunity to increase the biodiversity of the locality by requiring enhancement measures to be provided by condition, this has been included in the recommendation.

**Conclusion:**

32. On the basis of the above, Officers recommend that members approve the development subject to the conditions as included in the report above.

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.

**Background Papers:**

15/03189/FUL

**Contact Officer:** Robert Fowler

**Extension:** 2104

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015