

Development Management Ref No	No weeks on day of committee	Parish	Ward	Listed by:
161845	28/13	Ruscombe	Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe	Major

Applicant	McCarthy & Stone		
Location	134 – 146 London Road, Ruscombe	Postcode	RG10 9HJ
Proposal	Full application for the erection of 31 two bedroom apartments with associated communal areas, landscaping and parking (C3 residential use)		
Type	Full		
PS Category	7		
Officer	Graham Vaughan		

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on 1 st February 2017
REPORT PREPARED BY	Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

SUMMARY

The application site is within the modest development location of Ruscombe and is also an allocated site within the MDD for around 15 dwellings. Currently, the remains of a dwelling are on the site but otherwise it is an open field. The site is within a triangle of land surrounded by three roads with a residential character. Typically this is for two storey detached properties on a building line but there have been changes to this through backland development over time. The design and materials of these dwellings is therefore mixed.

The scheme is for full permission for the development of the site to erect 31 two bedroom apartments with associated landscaping and parking. The apartments are proposed as retirement living, through the applicant McCarthy & Stone. However, the only limitation on the apartments is an age exemption, in this case 55. There would not be any element of healthcare provided as a result of the development. The proposal is for a single plan building to ensure step free internal access across the site however it is been designed to provide articulation and to break up the massing the building as a whole. More specifically, the front section of the building has been designed to appear as individual dwellings whilst the central and rear sections are split across the land levels and have articulation through their roof forms.

The site has been subject to two previous applications; both outline proposals for residential development. The most recent, O/2014/1386 was conditionally approved and this has been a material consideration in the formation of the current application. As with the 2014 application, the current scheme has been considered by the South East Regional Design Review Panel. This has prompted alterations to be made to the scheme in relation to materials, landscaping, highways and design. More specifically, the Design Review Panel was asked by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to consider the single plan form for the building and its impact on the character of the area. However, the Design Review Panel does not consider harm to arise and therefore the scheme has been taken forward on this basis.

The site is within development limits and therefore is acceptable in principle. Although, the 31 units exceed the site allocation of around 15 units, this in itself is not considered to make a development unacceptable in principle. The application needs to demonstrate however that the over provision would not result in any harmful impacts in planning terms. Through the Design Review Panel and the design process, it is considered the scheme would not have a harmful impact on the character of the area. Specifically, the built form of the proposal is broken up and landscaping would enhance the overall setting. With regards to residential amenities there are numerous residential properties around the site. However, due to the layout of the proposal and the separation distances to actual properties, no harm would occur in this respect. In terms of highways, the provision of three accesses into the site is considered acceptable as is the parking provision which accords with parking standards. Other impacts in terms of trees, ecology, environmental health and sustainable design are all considered acceptable and controlled by conditions.

As a result of the above, and the fact the proposal would provide older persons accommodation, the scheme is considered to be compliant with the development plan and is therefore recommended for conditional approval.

PLANNING STATUS

- Modest development location
- Allocated housing site
- Groundwater zone 3
- Wind turbine safeguarding zone
- Contaminated land consultation zone

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:

- A. Prior completion of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution to provide off-site affordable housing.**
- B. Conditions and informatives:**

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
2. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1100', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1101', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1102', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1110 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1112 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1350', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1210 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1211 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1212 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1213 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1310 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1311 Rev A', 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1312 Rev A' and 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1360 Rev A' received by the local planning authority on 20th July 2016 and the revised plans 21st December 2016. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. No development shall take place until a scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies the provisions and details to be made to establish a Project Community Liaison Group for the duration of the construction works. The scheme shall include details of dates of meetings and a name and telephone number for residents to contact should any issues arise during the construction period. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: In order to minimise disturbance to neighbours during construction works. Relevant Policy: Core Strategy policy CP3

4. a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Scheme of Works which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the details as so-approved (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme).

b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.

c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.

d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

5. Before any above ground work commences a Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The plan should detail items such as phasing of construction, lorry routing and potential numbers, types of piling rig and earth moving machinery to be utilized and measures proposed to mitigate the impact of construction operations such as noise, odour/smoke, vibration and dust. In addition the plan should make note of

any temporary lighting that will be used during the construction phase of the development. The plan shall be implemented in full and retained until the development has been constructed. Any deviation from this Statement shall be first agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure disruption is minimised as much as possible during construction. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP1 and CP3

6. Before any above ground work is commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building/s shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

7. Before any above ground work is commenced full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed finished floor levels or contours, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc.). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 (and TB06 for garden development)

8. Before any above ground work is commenced details of all boundary treatment(s) shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development or phased as agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be maintained in the approved form for so long as the development remains on the site.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and highway safety. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6.

9. Before any above ground work is commenced an Employment and Skills Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Employment and Skills Plan shall show how the development hereby permitted provides opportunities for training, apprenticeship or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills and shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure training opportunities are available for local workers. Relevant policy: Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB12

10. Before any above ground work is commenced details of any proposed external lighting scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall set out the steps that will be taken to ensure that external lighting does not cause a nuisance to local residents including future residents of the site and shall include details of location, direction and level of illumination.

Reason: To protect the amenity of local residents. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3.

11. Before any above ground work commences the applicant or their agents or successors in title have secured and implemented a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated and recorded or preserved in situ in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the borough. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

12. Before any above ground work commences the following drainage details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- (i) The sizing of the basins to demonstrate that they can cater for flood volumes generated by the 1 in 100 year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change.
- (ii) Level details of the proposed SuDS features.
- (iii) Drainage strategy plan indicating the linkage of the permeable areas to the basins.
- (iv) SuDS maintenance strategy and who will be responsible for this throughout the lifetime of the development.
- (v) Finished floor levels of the proposed development

The submitted details shall be implemented as approved and thereafter maintained unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development would not have an adverse impact on flood risk for the surrounding area. Relevant Policy: MDD Local Plan policy CC09 and CC10

13. No building shall be occupied until details of secure and covered bicycle storage/ parking facilities for the visitors to the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The cycle storage/ parking shall be implemented in accordance with such details as may be approved before occupation of the development hereby permitted, and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 4 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

14. No building shall be occupied until secure and covered parking for cycles for

occupants has been provided in accordance with the approved drawing(s)/details. The cycle parking/ storage shall be permanently so-retained for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 4 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

15. No part of any building(s) hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning space shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than vehicle turning. The spaces as indicated on plan 'SE-2293-03-AC-PL1110 Rev A' shall remain as unallocated and shall not be sold or leased.

Reason: To provide adequate off-street vehicle parking and turning space and to allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear in the interests of road safety and convenience and providing a functional, accessible and safe development and in the interests of amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

16. No building shall be occupied until the bin storage area/ facilities have been provided in full accordance with the approved details. The bin storage area and facilities shall be permanently so-retained and used for no purpose other than the temporary storage of refuse and recyclable materials.

Reason: In the interests of visual and neighbouring amenities and functional development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04.

17. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details as agreed in 'Construction Method Statement, (McCarthy & Stone, June 2016)' and 'SE - 2293 - 03 - AC - PL1113 Rev A' received by the Local Planning Authority on 13th January 2017 and shall be implemented in full in accordance with the approved plan unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety & convenience and neighbour amenities. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

18. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details as agreed in 'Pre-commencement Reptile Protection Method Statement (Innovation Group Environmental Services, Ref: E-13195, December 2016) received by the Local Planning Authority on 13th January 2017 and shall be implemented in full in accordance with the approved plan unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are not adversely impacted upon as a result of the development. Relevant Policy: Core Strategy policy CP7

19. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details as agreed in 'Sustainability Statement – Focus Consultants, June 2016,

L1517' received by the Local Planning Authority on 20th July 2016 and shall be implemented in full in accordance with the approved plan unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development.

Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

20. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

21. The apartments hereby approved shall only be occupied by persons over the age of 55 and by any wife, husband or partner of such a person unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP7

22. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning, (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no additional windows or similar openings shall be constructed in the any of the elevations of the building hereby permitted except for any which may be shown on the approved drawing(s).

Reason: To safeguard the residential amenities of neighbouring properties.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3

23. The corridor windows in the south east elevation of the development hereby permitted shall be permanently obscure-glazed and fixed closed at all times.

Reason: To safeguard the residential amenities of neighbouring properties.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3

24. No works related to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 8.00am and 6.00pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to 13.00pm on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority

Reason: To safeguard amenity of neighbouring properties. Relevant policies: NPPF, Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3

25. No other development of the site as hereby approved shall take place until the access has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure adequate access into the site for vehicles, plant and

deliveries associated with the development in the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

26. In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. Any subsequent investigation/remedial/protective works deemed necessary by the LPA shall be carried out to agreed timescales and approved in writing by the local planning authority. If no contamination is encountered during the development correspondence confirming this fact shall be submitted to the LPA upon completion of the development.

Reason: To ensure that any contamination on the site is remediated to protect the existing/proposed occupants of the application site and adjacent land. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP1 and CP3

Informatives:

1. Thames Water will aim to provide customers with a minimum pressure of 10m head (approx. 1 bar) and a flow rate of 9 litres/minute at the point where it leaves Thames Waters pipes. The developer should take account of this minimum pressure in the design of the proposed development.
2. Records indicate a public sewer beneath or in close proximity to the proposed development. In order to protect public sewers and to ensure that Thames Water can gain access to those sewers for future repair and maintenance, approval must be sought from Thames Water where the erection of a building or an extension to a building or underpinning work would be over the line of, or would come within 3 metres of, a public sewer. Thames Water will usually refuse such approval in respect of the construction of new buildings, but approval may be granted in some cases for extensions to existing buildings. The applicant is advised to contact Thames Water Developer Services on 0845 850 2777 to discuss the options available at this site.
3. The developer's attention is drawn to the fact that this permission does not authorise the physical construction of the proposed off-site highway works and site access connections to the public highway. A separate legal agreement made with the Council under s.278 of the Highways Act 1980 is required. No work within or affecting the public highway shall commence until the agreement has been completed and the Council, as local highway authority, has approved all construction and installation details together with a programme of works.
4. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of:
 - (i) full pre-application process was undertaken by the applicant;
 - (ii) the design of the proposal;
 - (iii) planning issues relating to ecology and drainage;
 - (iv) amended plans being submitted by the applicant to overcome concerns relating design and residential amenity;

The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a

positive outcome of these discussions.

PLANNING HISTORY

- O/2011/2661 - Outline application for the erection of 26 dwellings with associated access and parking. Demolition of 146 London Road. (Access appearance Layout and Scale to be considered) refused on 20th March 2012
- O/2014/1386 - Outline proposal for the erection of 16 dwellings with redevelopment of site and associated works following demolition of existing dwelling (All matters reserved) conditionally approved on 19th August 2015

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area	0.63 hectares
Proposed density	49 dwellings per hectare
Existing units	1 (remains of former dwelling)
Proposed units	31
Existing parking spaces	0
Proposed parking spaces	33

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust	No comments received
Berkshire Archaeology	No objection subject to condition (11)
Crime Prevention Design Officer	No comments received
National Grid	No comments received
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No objection
Southern Gas Networks	No comments received
SEE Power Distribution	No comments received
Thames Water	No objection subject to informative (2, 3)
NHS Wokingham Clinical Commissioning Group	No comments received
WBC Biodiversity	No objection subject to condition (18)
WBC Community Infrastructure	No comments received
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to condition (12)
WBC Education	No comments received
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions (5, 10, 26)
WBC Economic Sustainability Team (Employment Skills)	No objection subject to condition (9)
WBC Housing	No comments received
WBC Highways	No objection subject to conditions (5, 13 – 17, 21, 25)
WBC LUTT (Policy)	No objection
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection subject to conditions (4, 7, 8 20)
WBC Property Services	No comments received
WBC Waste Services	No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Ruscombe Parish Council: Objection received with regards to the following:

- There is not a requirement for this type of housing
- Impact on local infrastructure

- Out of keeping with the character of the area and the village design statement
- Parking is inadequate
- Drainage would not be acceptable
- Boundary plans need clarification
- Building is too dominant

Local Members: Objection received from Councillor Pitts with regards to the following:

- The scale and mass of the proposed building is totally out of character with the surrounding area and Ruscombe
- The need for such a development is questionable
- The proposed parking is totally inadequate. Residents would need a car to access the village and the bus stop is not nearby
- The current doctor's surgery is heavily used and it is not easy to get an appointment. The fact that s106 money goes to the NHS is irrelevant as it is difficult to recruit GPs

Neighbours:

From WBC consultation:

9 letters of objection received with regards to the following:

- Too many properties proposed (See principle and character section)
- Out of character with the area and doesn't comply with the village design statement (See character section)
- Insufficient parking provided (See paragraph 32)
- Loss of privacy from overlooking (See neighbour section)
- Surface water flooding would be worsened (See paragraph 34)
- Too far from the centre of Twyford (Officer note: allocated housing site and therefore sustainability already accepted)
- Substation gives access to adjoining properties (Officer note: substation would be secured behind fencing/landscaping)
- Site would be better used for low rise development (See character section)
- Sets a precedent (Officer note: site is unique and therefore any other sites may not accommodate the development)
- Strain on medical centre (Officer note: infrastructure impacts mitigated through CIL payments)
- Overdevelopment of the site (See character section)
- Impact on traffic (See paragraph 31)
- Family homes are needed (Officer note: applications have to be assessed on their own merits. There is a demonstrated need for elderly persons accommodation as per paragraph 11)
- Fencing is required between the parking area and residential properties (Officer note: boundary treatment controlled by condition 8)
- Overbearing impact due to height of proposal and proximity to boundaries (See neighbour section)

1 letter of comment received with regards to the following:

- Clarification required on maintenance of planting (Officer note: this would be maintained by McCarthy & Stone through their management of the site)
- Surface water comes off the site as drainage is poor (See paragraph 34)

From McCarthy & Stone Consultation:

33 letters of supporting received with regards to the following:

- Provision for elderly people in the area

- Near the centre of Twyford
- Will fit in design wise with other properties
- Good for local village, shops and businesses
- Type of accommodation proposed would be very useful
- Better than lots of residential homes
- Land has been an eyesore for years

From 2nd WBC consultation:

7 letters of objection received with regards to the following:

- Not in accordance with Ruscombe Village Design Statement (See character section)
- Overdevelopment of the site (See character section)
- Height of flats would be obtrusive (See neighbour section)
- Paving would reduce absorption of rainwater (See paragraph 34)
- GP surgery currently full (Officer note: not a material planning consideration)
- Not enough parking (See paragraph 32)
- Already have retirement homes in the area (Officer note: not a material planning consideration)
- Overlooking (See neighbour section)
- Family houses are required in the area (Officer note: applications have to be assessed on their own merits. There is a demonstrated need for elderly persons accommodation as per paragraph 11)
- Location of substation could be dangerous (Officer note: no objection from consultees regarding this)

APPLICANTS POINTS

- Site is allocated for housing and development is expected on the site as part of the Development Plan for the Borough
- Site is in a sustainable location
- National and local planning policy support the need for older persons accommodation
- Proposal has been subject to a design review and amended accordingly

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP5	Housing mix, density and affordability
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP17	Housing Delivery
	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB05	Housing Mix
	TB07	Internal Space standards
	TB09	Residential accommodation for vulnerable groups
	TB12	Employment Skills Plan
	TB21	Landscape Character
	SAL02	Allocated housing development sites
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide – Section 4
	NISS	DCLG – National Internal Space Standards
	RVDS	Ruscombe Village Design Statement

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development:

1. The site is located within Ruscombe and currently comprises of an empty field save for the remains of a former dwelling. A distinctive but failing line of conifers is at the front of the site which prevents views from London Road. Around the site are residential properties. The scheme is for the erection of 31 two bedroom apartments with associated landscaping, communal space and parking. This would be provided through a single building however its form and massing would be split in response to land levels and the character of the area. The main access would be from London Road at the north eastern section of the site, providing vehicular access to the main parking area. Two other accesses are also proposed with parking provision.
2. The proposal has been submitted by McCarthy & Stone, who specialise in retirement housing. The scheme would be for retirement housing however this would only be applied through an age exemption, in this case over 55. It is not proposed to provide any healthcare through the development and therefore the apartments are considered as C3 residential use class in planning terms. This type of older persons accommodation provided by McCarthy & Stone is aimed at those in the early stages of retirement, who wish to downsize into high quality but low maintenance apartments instead of those which offer specific healthcare needs. The emphasis with this type of development is more discrete features such as higher levels of security and step free access to the apartments. Other internal features are also typical of this type of development but are not a planning consideration. The development would be visited by a Housing Manager who would arrange for aspects such as window cleaning and ground maintenance to take place but would not be required to live on the site nor be

there every day.

3. The overall design of the scheme is relatively challenging with the requirement for a single building to be designed with broken up form whilst responding to the topography of the site. The final design brought forward is for a 'horseshoe' shape building staggered over different floors due to land levels. The building can be split into three areas; firstly the frontage onto London Road. This involves two storey elements of the building deliberately designed to look as individual houses which are connected via a lower subservient communal corridor. This element of the proposal would be situated on the building line established by other properties along London Road. Behind this element would be additional flats and the refuse/cycle/buggy store which would be contained in a flat roof section and the apartments would look directly onto the courtyard/communal area. Two secondary entrances are proposed in conjunction with the additional access/parking areas from London Road. The design of the building has deliberately picked up on the design elements of London Road and therefore has a gable roof as well as a projecting gable or flat roof frontage.
4. Secondly, is the central section of the site which comprises of a two storey form; however it would be set higher than the front section due to the land levels. This section is designed as more traditional semi-detached dwellings (with the subservient link corridor) when viewing from the car parking area but again also has the flat roof section with additional apartments behind. Due to being adjacent to the car parking area, the main entrance to building would be contained in this section and footpaths from London Road and around the parking area are provided. A similar design as the front section has been taken forward with projecting front gables or flat roof elements to add variety. However, the main roof is hipped to reduce built form, particularly towards the London Road end.
5. The third section of the proposal whilst two storey, has been designed with reduced mass and roof form and is connected to the central section by a flat roof element comprising of the internal corridor. Although this continues the design theme of the proposal, it has been designed with lower eaves to the rear and without the flat roof section facing the courtyard area. As such, from the courtyard area the typical design features are seen but from the opposite side, i.e. from Walnut Tree Close, a much blanker elevation is seen. Some variation is proposed through the flat roof section however this element of the proposal is in direct response to the constraint of the neighbouring dwelling. Again the roof would be hipped.
6. More generally, the apartments would all be two bedrooms and have accessible showering/toilet facilities. Also proposed are separate living rooms and kitchens and all upper floor apartments would have access to an external balcony. The building would be set around a communal garden area which would have defined walkways and seating areas. Beyond the third section of the building would be an informal planting area which can be accessed from either side of the site. Landscaping to the front would comprise of trees and hedgerow to help alleviate the built form and integrate the building into the street scene. Infiltration ditches are also proposed along the frontage as part of the drainage system however these would be designed to enhance the landscaping. Along the side boundaries existing vegetation would be retained. In terms of materials, it is proposed to use a red brick to match other properties on London Road and a pearl silver render.

Roofs would comprise of grey slate or ply membrane and fenestration would typically be grey UPVc.

7. Given the massing of the building and its context in a lower density setting, it was considered prudent for the scheme to be reviewed by the South East Design Review Panel. Following the review, the panel's comments were taken into account by the applicant and revised plans submitted. The report makes reference to the panel's comments in assessing the design of the proposal as this has been influential in the acceptability of the scheme. Also referenced is the extant outline permission on the site for 16 dwellings: O/2014/1386. The applicant has provided 3D modelling of this approved scheme to enable comparisons between this and the current proposal.

Principle of Development:

8. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
9. Policy CC02 of the MDD sets out the development limits for each settlement as defined on the policies map and therefore replaces the proposals map adopted through the Core Strategy, as per the requirement of policy CP9. Policy CP9 sets out that development proposals located within development limits will be acceptable, having regard to the service provisions associated with the major, modest and limited categories. As the site is within a modest development location, the proposal is acceptable in principle.
10. Notwithstanding the above, the site is allocated for residential use through policy SAL02 of the MDD which designates the site for around 15 dwellings. Therefore, it needs to be demonstrated that the proposal accords with this allocation both in terms of use and number of dwellings provided. As set out above, the proposal is for age exclusive apartments provided by McCarthy & Stone. A clear distinction should be made in that the accommodation is to allow for older people to live independently rather than providing any element of healthcare. In this respect, the proposal is for C3 use class housing just with an age exemption.
11. Through national and local policy, it is recognised there is a need for older person's accommodation. Due to an ageing population, there is a growing requirement for specific accommodation that allows older people to downsize into appropriate, low maintenance apartments. The applicant has provided several national reports that highlight this. Supporting this, the NPPF states at paragraph 50 that local authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends with older people given as an example. At a local level, it is noted that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment projects an increase in older people over the development plan period. Furthermore, policy CP2 of the Core Strategy states "to ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of: an ageing population,

particularly in terms of housing, health and wellbeing". Policy TB09 of the MDD also supports, in principle, schemes that provide for the elderly through purpose built accommodation. As such, it is considered there is a recognised need for older person's accommodation both nationally and locally which is reflected in planning policy.

12. The proposal is for 31 apartments which allows for a greater level of development than the original allocation envisaged as set out in policy SAL02. However, the policy is worded to allow flexibility in the number of units provided due to site constraints and opportunities. The overprovision of residential units in itself is not considered to make a development unacceptable in principle and it should be noted that the overprovision is beneficial to housing land supply. Additionally, the provision of older person's accommodation is considered beneficial and adds weight in favour of the quantum of development. As a result of the above, the provision of 31 apartments with an age exemption is accepted in principle.

Character of the Area:

13. **Existing character:** The site is located within a triangle of land between London Road, New Road and Northbury Avenue. Within and adjoining this triangle are residential properties and this is the established character (save for one commercial use in the form of a nursery on New Road). The site itself is essentially an open field with hedgerow and trees along the boundaries. The remains of a former dwelling are located in the northern corner but otherwise the site is undeveloped. The land rises towards the south east and is most noticeable at the southern corner.
14. The junction of London Road and New Road represents the start of the settlement of Ruscombe and is characterised by detached two storey dwellings along both roads, although there are some bungalows. There are a mix of sizes and scales which results in multiple roof forms including hipped and gable. There is also a mix of materials with red brick being predominant but other colours and render also present in the street scene. The more defining characteristic of both New Road and this side of London Road is the set back of the dwellings on a building line which allows for a grass verge adjacent to the main highway. On the opposite side of London Road there is a set design of dwellings with a row of red brick, two storey semi-detached dwellings. These are set back further from the road including a group set on their own side road.
15. Within the triangle of land, and immediately to the south west of the site, the character for detached dwellings set back from the road continues to the junction with Northbury Avenue. However, Russet Gardens is a small cul-de-sac backland development to the rear of these properties. The dwellings are semi-detached and arranged in a tighter, denser form of development than those on London Road. Northbury Avenue signifies another change comprising of bungalows on either side of the road. These properties follow a set pattern with similar materials and set back on a building line. Off Northbury Avenue is Northbury Lane which leads to Garraway Close. Similar to Russet Gardens, this backland development is a much denser form and comprises both semi-detached and detached dwellings. An additional dwelling, off Garraway Close (Magnolia House) is a further backland development and is located adjacent to

the application site. Close to Magnolia House, but accessed from New Road, is Walnut Tree Close. This is further backland development consisting of 10 detached, two storey properties arranged around a single access road.

16. **Scale, massing and layout:** The proposal has been designed as a single building due to the product McCarthy & Stone wish to provide. Specifically, this enables step free internal access to all the apartments. It is acknowledged however that this results in one large block which is different to the grain of development in the surrounding area. At this stage, it was considered prudent to take the application to the Design Review Panel to assess if this difference would cause harm to the character of the area. However, the Panel did not consider this to be the case and as such, significant weight is placed on this in taking the scheme forward. In any case, through the application process, the design of the building has been altered to encourage the built form to be broken up and articulated. Specifically, along the London Road frontage, the building has been divided with the internal corridor aspect set back to give the appearance of individual houses. There is also variation in the ridge height of these units however the scheme presents a step change in ridge heights along London Road. Given the character of London Road and the mix of ridge heights, this is considered appropriate.
17. The topography of the land results in a challenging site and therefore the scheme has been designed in a staggered form. Except for one part of the central section, the building remains as two storeys and the rear section is reduced in scale compared to the central area. It is noted that the central section appears higher than the front section particularly through the elevational plans and this impact was highlighted by the Design Review Panel. As a result, the roof for the central section has been hipped to reduce the amount of built form in this area. It is also considered that actual views of this part of the building would be difficult from the street scene due to the front section of the building. As such, due to the articulation of the building, the single plan form and scale of the proposal is not considered to result in a detrimental impact on the character of the area.
18. **Materials and design features:** As noted above, there is a mix of materials within the street scene although red brick is relatively prominent. The Design Review Panel considered that a more modern approach in terms of materials could be acceptable in the area given the variation however noted that the use of red brick to complement the existing properties would be beneficial to the scheme. It is acknowledged that the proposal would be of a more modern appearance, particularly when viewed against the properties on the opposite side of London Road. Nonetheless, the use of similar materials in a mixed area is considered appropriate.
19. The proposal uses multiple design features to give variety and articulation to the scheme. In particular, the use projecting gable frontages, brick detailing and balconies are considered to represent a high quality of design as well as being reflective of the street scene. Whilst it is noted that balconies are not a feature of the street scene, the use of glazed screen balconies, rather than a more solid balustrade form is considered to overcome this as they would not be overly prominent. The Design Review Panel noted that the north eastern elevation facing the main entrance lacked any architectural merit and therefore a bay form has been added to prevent this from being a blank elevation. The Design Review

Panel also noted that the internal and external facades of the proposal could benefit from the use of different materials. As a result, further analysis of the local vernacular has taken place and introduced into the scheme including brick detailing. The overall design approach and the articulation of the building form are therefore considered appropriate and create a suitable public façade and private area. Furthermore, changes to the main entrance from the car parking area have been made as a result of the Design Review Panel including a formal landscaping area to clearly indicate the entrance feature.

20. **Density:** The scheme is of a higher density than surrounding areas however this is because of the inclusion of multiple apartments instead of through separate detached dwellings. As noted above, the area is mixed in terms of its character and overall density. Walnut Tree Close is approximately 15 dwellings per hectare, with Garraway Close and Russet Gardens both approximately 32 dwellings per hectare. The site is allocated for residential use in the development plan and therefore it is envisaged that development can occur there. Given the size of the site, the density of any scheme is likely to be higher than the surrounding areas. It is acknowledged that the Ruscombe Village Design Statement states that development in this area should not be based solely on the character of Garraway Close but nonetheless the mix of densities in the immediate area is considered an indication of the established and varied character. As such, it is not considered the proposal would detrimentally impact on this.
21. **Landscaping:** Along London Road, there are numerous hedgerows along the front boundaries with gaps for access. This is reinforced directly opposite the site by the semi-detached dwellings set further back on their own road resulting in a long hedgerow by the road side. Additionally, both sides of the road contain grass verges. The proposal would result in the loss of the conifer trees at the front of the site however these are of a declining quality and failing in places. The loss of these trees, albeit removing the front boundary element; has been considered acceptable in previous applications, specifically O/2014/1386.
22. In any case, development of the site is an opportunity to provide replacement landscaping and achieve betterment across the site. Specifically, the front boundary planting has been carried forward in the design proposals to integrate into the street scene. The Design Review Panel considered the frontage landscaping should be broken down more and therefore individual trees with some hedgerow have now been included. It was also considered that the substation would benefit from greater landscaping around it to ensure it did not become a focal point when moving into the car parking area.
23. Also noted by the panel was to simplify the planting palette and use more native species. Although specific species would be controlled by the landscaping condition, the indicative species in the Design and Access Statement are considered appropriate. Another aspect considered by the panel was the courtyard area. Following their comments this has been redesigned to take better account of the topography of the land as well as include connectivity around the site through informal pathways. Importantly, the boundary planting, particularly along the east and west edges of the site, would be enhanced and would help to mitigate the built form. Planting is also used to alleviate the impact of the parking areas and provide screening to the rear of the site. Overall, the landscaping is

considered appropriate for the site and would help in mitigating the increase in built form. The Tree and Landscape Officer does not object subject to conditions (7, 8).

Residential Amenities:

24. Properties on opposite side of London Road: These properties would be located approximately 70 metres away from the proposal and therefore no harmful impact would occur with regards to a loss of light, overlooking or overbearing.

25. 148 London Road: This property would be located 15.8 metres from the nearest element of built form (side to side relationship) and therefore no harmful loss of light or overbearing impact would occur. With regards to overlooking, there are no side facing windows other than at ground floor on the elevation facing the site and therefore no harmful impact would occur in terms of overlooking into the property. In terms of the garden, the closest point of the development (i.e. the balconies) would be 24.8 metres increasing to 27.5 metres at the 'top' of the site. Although the topography of the site is acknowledged, the separation distance and the boundary treatments that could be secured are considered to mitigate the fact there are properties facing towards the garden area.

26. 132 London Road: Whilst this property would be located approximately 5.0 metres from the nearest element of built form (up to a single storey extension and side to side relationship), this would be on the same building line and there are no windows serving habitable rooms (save for one high level window) on the elevation facing the site. As such, no harmful impact would occur with regards to loss of light, overbearing or overlooking into the property. With regards to overlooking of the garden, it is considered the proposed apartments at the 'top' of the site and those through the centre would potentially have an impact. The apartments at the top of the site would be 48 metres away and although the topography of the land is acknowledged, this would not be any worse of an impact than the overlooking from Magnolia House, Northbury Lane. The apartments through the centre of the site would be 28 metres at their nearest point and again, although the topography of the land is acknowledged, the separation distance and boundary treatments would mitigate the impact.

27. Magnolia House, Northbury Avenue: Whilst this property would be located approximately 5.0 metres from the nearest element of built form this would be on the same building line and there are no windows serving habitable rooms on the elevation facing the site. As such, no harmful impact would occur with regards to loss of light, overbearing or overlooking into the property. With regards to overlooking of the garden, it is considered the proposed apartments at the 'bottom' of the site and those through the centre would potentially have an impact. The apartments at the bottom of the site would be 38 metres away and although the topography of the land is acknowledged, this would not be any worse of an impact than the overlooking from 132 London Road. The apartments through the centre of the site would be 25.4 metres at their nearest point and again, although the topography of the land is acknowledged, the separation distance and boundary treatments would mitigate the impact.

28. Properties on Walnut Tree Close: With regards to 6 Walnut Tree Close, it is

noted at its closest point, the proposal would be 12 metres away. However, this is between the corners of the buildings. The land would be reformed slightly to ensure that the building would be no higher than 6 Walnut Tree Close. Additionally, the roof form would be reduced when compared to the other sections of the building. Although it is noted that the proposal would be close to the property and this was highlighted by the Design Review Panel, the western elevation of the dwelling contains either secondary windows or windows serving non-habitable rooms. As such, the proximity of the proposal does not result in a harmful overbearing or loss of light impact.

29. With regards to overlooking, no windows serving habitable rooms would be on the elevation facing the neighbouring property. The only windows facing the dwelling would be for the corridor element which could be obscured glazed and non-opening in any case (23). The northern elevation of 6 Walnut Tree Close does contain windows serving habitable rooms however these would be of a sufficient distance and orientation to ensure no harmful overlooking, overbearing or loss of light impact would occur. It is noted the garden would be impacted to an extent however the main section of the garden is intended to the rear (or beyond the north elevation). Boundary treatment helps obscure the site from view and this would be retained but in any case a condition requiring details to be agreed is included (8). As the other properties in Walnut Tree Close are located further away, it is considered the separation distance and boundary treatment would mitigate any harmful impact.

Access and Movement:

30. **Highway Safety:** The site would be accessed from London Road and this is considered acceptable in terms of visibility splays. The introduction of three separate accesses was considered acceptable as part of the previous outline application (O/2014/1386) and would be similar to the existing properties along London Road. With regards to the internal traffic movements, the main access would maintain a 5 metre width to the 'top' of the site and sufficient turning space is provided. In terms of construction traffic, a Construction Method Statement has been submitted and the Highways Officer does not object to this subject to a condition (17).

31. **Traffic Impact:** It is noted that the site does not generate any trips at this time as it is currently vacant (save for the remains of a dwelling). Although an increase in trips would have some impact on the local network, the site is allocated for a residential use in the development plan. As such, it is envisaged that the development of the site and the additional trips that would be created could be accommodated in the Borough. In any case, the additional trips generated are not considered to have a detrimental impact at peak times (based on TRICS data). The Highways Officer has considered this and does not object to the proposal.

32. **Parking:** The proposal indicates that 33 parking spaces would be provided across the site on an unallocated basis. This would be through a main area off the main access and additional spaces to the front of the site. On the basis of a C3 residential use, the parking standards require one space for each dwelling provided that they are all unallocated. As a result, there is an overprovision of parking by 2 spaces when considered against the standards although it is noted

this needs to be secured through a condition (15). The provision of unallocated parking allows for flexibility between residents and visitors to the site. As described above, the scheme has been submitted as part of McCarthy & Stone's older person's accommodation. The flats are intended as properties for those over the age of 55 and it is accepted that there is a reduced demand for parking as a result of the age restriction. On this basis, and subject to a condition limiting the age of occupants (21), the Highways Officer considers the parking provision is acceptable.

33. **Sustainability:** As the site is allocated for housing and within development limits, the sustainability in highway terms has already been considered acceptable through the adoption of the MDD. The proposal includes sufficient space for cycle and buggy provision within the building. Cycle provision for visitors can be secured through a condition (13).

Flooding and Drainage:

34. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore there is a low probability of flooding. However, it is noted that the site has a history of surface water drainage issues and therefore a Flood Risk Assessment and a Drainage Strategy has been submitted. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would create a large amount of impermeable surfaces, the FRA concludes that with appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage methods, and in particular permeable pavements, geo-cellular attenuation systems and traditional lined soakaways, the impact of the proposal could be mitigated. The Drainage Officer has considered this and, following further details regarding infiltration rates, does not object to the scheme subject to a condition (12).

Trees:

35. With regards to the impact on trees through construction, a tree survey has been submitted which shows there are trees at the edges of the site which would require some protection. This could be controlled through a condition (4).

Environmental Health:

36. The Environmental Health Officer has not raised specific objections to the proposal but note that some environmental health issues would require details to be agreed in a Construction Environmental Management Plan including mitigating the impact of dust (5). Due to the scale of development proposed, a precautionary contamination condition is recommended (26) as well as details of an external lighting scheme to be agreed (10).

Amenity Space for Future Occupiers:

37. The Borough Design Guide advises that all dwellings should have access to some form of amenity space preferably in the form of private or communal garden space. It is also noted that upper floor dwellers rarely have access to gardens and therefore balconies should be incorporated to provide privacy and receive sunlight.

38. It is proposed to provide communal space to the western end of the site as part

of a landscaped communal garden. This would be an area for residents to congregate or walk round and, following the design review panel's comments, has been designed to better reflect the topography of the land. The space is considered appropriate and usable and with appropriate landscaping would receive sunlight but also achieve some privacy.

39. Also proposed are balconies on the upper floor flats. Each balcony is of a suitable size that can accommodate people and furniture if required and therefore no objection is raised in this respect. The Design Review Panel did note that the balconies facing the courtyard could result in some overlooking between properties. However, the balconies are generally set back resulting in oblique angles towards other apartments and in any case, such relationships would be expected in an apartment scheme.

Internal Space Standards:

40. Internal space standards are set nationally and the requirement for a two bed (four bed space) apartment is 70m². The smallest apartments in the proposal would be 87m² and therefore no objection is raised in this respect.

Ecology:

41. An ecological survey was carried out and submitted with the application. The survey concludes that the habitats found in the site were of low ecological value and are common and widespread in the local area. However, in respect of protected species, slow worms are known to be present on the site. As a result, translocation of these reptiles has taken place and therefore their conservation status has been maintained. Notwithstanding this, the Ecology Officer has raised a concern that not all the slow worms may have been removed and therefore recommends that a mitigation strategy is agreed by condition (18).

Sustainable Design and Construction:

42. Due to the replacement of the Code for Sustainable Homes with national standards in building regulations, the proposal is not required to meet Code 4 in line with Policy CC04 of the MDD. However, the policy does require that all development should incorporate suitable waste management facilities including on-site recycling. It is considered that sufficient internal and external storage could be provided to accommodate this.

43. Policy CC05 requires residential proposals of more than 10 dwellings to deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology. An Energy Statement has been submitted which states how this would be achieved through the use of solar PV panels. As such, it is considered necessary to condition that the development is carried out in accordance with this statement (19).

Community Infrastructure Levy:

44. As the proposal is for new residential floor space, it would be a CIL liable development. CIL is charged at a rate of £365 per square metre. A CIL liability notice would be issued in the event of the application being approved.

Affordable Housing:

45. As per policy CP5 of the Core Strategy, a 40% provision of affordable housing is required which equates to 12.4 units (£1,307,702 index linked as an off-site contribution). However, it would not be possible to provide affordable housing on site as the scheme is not large enough to provide a separate block of housing, and 'pepper potting' of the affordable units would not be possible due to the significantly higher management charges levied on occupiers in schemes of this type. The Council's Economic Sustainability Team agrees that in this instance it would be appropriate to accept a financial contribution as a commuted sum in lieu of on-site affordable housing provision. This would assist in enabling the provision of larger affordable units elsewhere within the Borough.

46. The 'Affordable Housing Statement' submitted alongside the planning application indicated that the development would not be able to provide a contribution towards the provision of off-site affordable housing. However, the viability has been independently assessed and it has been found that a viable scheme could still be delivered were a financial contribution of £150,000 provided. The applicant has agreed this figure, and therefore a commuted sum of £150,000 for the provision of affordable housing will be included within a S106 Legal Agreement.

Employment Skills:

47. Policy TB12 of the MDD requires major applications to demonstrate how they can encourage the use of local skills and employment. The proposal is considered appropriate for this and therefore a condition requiring a plan to be submitted is included (9).

CONCLUSION

The application is considered to be acceptable in terms of the impact on the character of the area, the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and future occupiers. Sufficient parking provision has been indicated and the proposal would provide mitigation for protected species. Adding weight in favour of the proposal is the provision of older person's accommodation. As such, the proposal is recommended for conditional approval.

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