

PU/3559

3 August 2009

BY EMAIL

Mr J Bridgwater
Head of Development Control and Major Developments
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
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Dear Mr Bridgwater,

The Garage, Chalton-on-Otmoor - Application 08/02493/F

Further to our meeting and my email of 10 July 2009, please find attached for your consideration the revised drawings for the above.

The amended scheme now includes 6 dwellings, 4 x 2 bed, 1 x 3 bed and 1 x 4 bed. This has been achieved by providing 3 smaller 2 bed units (Plots 1-3) within the space previously occupied by the 2 larger 3 bed units (Plots 1 & 2). It also results in the development as a whole extending about 1m further into the site. The layout of the dwellings on Plots 4-6 (formerly 3-5) remains the same.

It is intended that the additional dwelling provided on Plot 1 will be an affordable dwelling in order to address one of the issues raised by Planning Committee at its meeting on 11 June 2009. As you are aware, National Planning Policy only requires provision for affordable housing to be made in respect of schemes for 15 dwellings and above, unless there is a locally based policy in place within an adopted statutory development plan. This is not the case within Cherwell which currently operates a non-statutory policy where provision on sites below 15 is based on negotiation. It is on this basis that the offer of one affordable dwelling is made in this case.

As stated in the application the main purpose of obtaining planning permission for the redevelopment of The Garage is to raise funds that would not otherwise be available on the commercial market to enable Charlton Services to relocate to a more suitable site and to renew its fleet of vehicles so that they will comply with increasingly onerous environmental legislation. In this way the business can be sustained for the future together with most of the existing jobs.

Although Charlton Services does not currently have a site in mind, ideally it would wish to relocate to leased premises in Bicester. Such decisions cannot obviously be made until planning permission has been obtained and a value for the site has been established.

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As you will appreciate when negotiations concerning the development of this site were commenced in 2007, residential land values were at a historic peak. Since then, not only has the value of residential land plummeted but the original scheme for 7 dwellings has for planning reasons had to be reduced to 6, including one affordable, which will further depress the value of the site. Consequently, there is no scope for increasing the level of affordable housing further.

I will now turn to the second issue raised by Planning Committee, namely the relationship with the adjoining dwelling, Watergrass Hill.

I have visited the site again to remind myself of the present relationship between the bus depot and that property and the following features were in evidence:

- The whole of the SE elevation of the dwelling is masked by the Charlton Services maintenance building which is located only 1.2m away and has a window at ground floor level facing NW.
- The prefabricated mess room regularly used by staff is located on piers to the rear of the maintenance building some 2m from the boundary with Watergrass Hill and this has clear glazed windows which face NW and provide views directly over the private amenity space to the rear of the dwelling.
- The open yard area is elevated in relation to the rear garden of Watergrass Hill which increases the dominance of the large number of coaches parked there.

In order to improve the relationship between the proposed dwellings and Watergrass Hill and its garden the 2 bed dwellings on Plots 1-3 have been designed so that there are no windows at first floor to habitable rooms and the windows at that level serving the landings and bathrooms would be obscure glazed. Consequently, there would be no overlooking from the new dwellings.

The dwelling on Plot 6 is not located directly behind Watergrass Hill and there is also a distance of 26m between their respective front and rear elevations which is 5m more than is commonly regarded as acceptable in order to provide dwellings with an acceptable level of privacy and amenity.

In order to protect the existing hedges and shrubs along the boundary with Watergrass Hill and allow further space for planting the garage to the Plot 6 dwelling has been located slightly further from the boundary and the proposed close boarded fence has been located 1.5m from the boundary. The garage and fence will screen views at ground level into the garden of Watergrass Hill and will also mitigate the effects of activity within the access road although this is likely to be small compared to the movements of the large commercial vehicles that currently takes place

In my view the development as proposed, even if the above existing features were not in evidence would be entirely acceptable in amenity terms. However, comparing the present privacy and amenities of Watergrass Hill with that which would be the case following the implementation of the development it is clear that the occupants would benefit greatly. I therefore cannot understand why they would wish to oppose the development.

I trust that you will agree that the amendments made to the proposals meet the requirements of Planning Committee in full and that the application can now be approved.

At our meeting you also offered to circulate a copy of the text of my letter to the Members and I would be grateful if you could do this when the application is again considered.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Uzzell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Uzzell DipTP MRTPI

c.c. Mr N Holder