

Sonning Common Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in the Village Hall on Monday 17 November 2014 at 1915 hours.

- Present:** Ms Noble (chairman), Mrs Lewis, Mr Rawlins, Mr Greenwood, Mr Reynolds, Mr Kedge (ex-officio), Mr Stoves (ex-officio), Mrs Varnes (Deputy Parish Clerk).
- P15/092** Apologies for absence: none.
- P15/093** Declarations of interest: none.
- P15/094** Public question time: nine members of the public were present, seven in relation to the proposed development at 31 Woodlands Road and two in relation to the Gardeners Copse application.
- P15/095** New applications:
- 095.01/P14/S3419/FUL. A new two-storey dwelling with accommodation in the roof space, parking provision and associated landscaping at 31 Woodlands Road RG4 9TD.
- During public question time residents neighbouring the proposed site outlined their strenuous objections to the plan: namely that it was inappropriate and represented an over-development of the site; was out of character with the surrounding area; of poor design; adversely affected the privacy and amenity use of neighbouring residents; provided an unwelcome shared access with 31 Woodlands Road and an "open car park" on-site. There was further concern over additional pressure being placed upon the 1930s drainage system, the removal of an established cherry tree and the use of hard landscaping at the front of the proposed property.
- The project's agent Mr T Rumble, of Reading-based Woolf Bond Planning and the architect, Mr D Coventry, outlined the proposal's benefits; that it was a sustainable and appropriate residential development in an accessible location which met current planning guidelines; that sufficient space was available to accommodate it; and that it been designed with existing residents' privacy in mind.
- After discussion the committee agreed unanimously to recommend to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) that the application be refused (see letter attached).
- 095.02/P14/S3089/FUL. A new four-bedroom dwelling and detached double garage (as amended by agent's documentation received on 21 October) on land adjoining 102 Wood Lane RG4 9SL. After discussion the committee agreed unanimously to recommend to SODC that the amended application be refused because the proposed new dwelling was still too far forward of the building line on Reade's Lane.
- 095.03/P14/S3324/HH. A single-storey conservatory to the rear of 6 Gardeners Copse RG4 9JU. After discussion the committee agreed unanimously to recommend to SODC that the amended application be approved.

095.04/P14/S3247/FUL. Change of use from the storage of agricultural machines, tree surgery equipment and horticultural machinery to the storage of oxygen and gas bottles at Blounts Farm, Blounts Court Road RG4 9PA. After discussion the committee agreed unanimously to recommend to SODC that the amended application be approved.

P15/096

Applications granted:

099.01/P14/S1503/FUL. The construction of a two-storey building, with undercroft carport, to accommodate an A2 office unit (financial and professional services) at ground floor level with a self-contained two-bedroom flat above at the corner of Green Lane/Wood Lane. Noted. It was agreed that the deputy clerk would write to the landlord to request that additional car parking be provided.

096.02/P14/S2751/O. A new four-bedroom detached chalet style bungalow at 24 Reade's Lane RG4 9LP. Noted.

096.03/P14/S2236/RM. The demolition of 15 Baskerville Road and its replacement with three chalet bungalows and carports with associated access and parking. Noted.

096.04/P14/S2523/HH. Retrospective consent for a close board wooden fence at 24 Kennylands Road RG4 9JT. Noted.

P15/097

Applications refused: none.

P15/098

To note the intention by Harlequin Group to install a 1.6m high x 1.2m long x 0.4m deep green broadband cabinet on Wood Lane near the Peppard Road junction. Noted.

P15/099

Matters for future consideration: none.

The meeting closed at 1957.

Chairman: Dated:

SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Office

VILLAGE HALL, WOOD LANE
SONNING COMMON, OXON, RG4 9SL

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Ms Victoria Butterworth
Planning Officer
South Oxfordshire District Council

Monday 24 November 2014

Dear Ms Butterworth

Re: P14/S3419/FUL Land adjacent to 31 Woodlands Road, Sonning Common RG4 9TD

At its meeting on Monday 17 November 2014 members of Sonning Common Parish Council's Planning Committee voted unanimously to recommend to SODC rejection of the above application on seven main grounds. That the proposed new dwelling is:

1. An over-development of the site (contrary to policies G2, CSH1 and CSH2)

A three-bedroom, three-storey detached house is excessive in terms of mass and density for this site and would dominate surrounding properties. The site at 0.028ha provides less than 75 per cent of the recommended minimum space available per dwelling, based on SODC's policy of 25 dwellings per hectare – that is 0.4ha for an average-sized dwelling. In terms of CSH2 this proposal would plainly have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area and existing properties. The proposed new house would severely limit access to the back gardens of both 31 and 31a Woodlands Road making the removal of garden waste extremely difficult. Access to the rear of 31a is just 0.65m at its narrowest point, while the recommended separation distance is 1.5m.

2. Out of keeping with the character of area (contrary to policies G2 and G5)

Surrounding properties are all medium to large-sized detached and semi-detached houses with sizeable front and rear gardens and driveways and garages to provide satisfactory off-road parking. There are also adequate separation distances between surrounding properties unlike with this proposal. The applicant claims the proposed separation distances are similar to those between 27, 27a and 25 Woodlands Road (Design and Access Statement 4.4). The separation distance between no. 27 and its neighbours, gable to gable, is actually 2.4m with number 25 and 2m with 27a. The committee considers that this application would have a significant negative impact on the street scene.

3. Detrimental to the local landscape (contrary to policies C4 and C9)

Despite the agent's assurances that no trees would be removed to accommodate the proposed new dwelling (Design and Access Statement 4.14), neighbours have reported that an established cherry tree, thought to be about 60 years old, was felled in the back garden of 31 Woodlands Road sometime during 25 to 30 August 2014. The visit by SODC's planning officer took place on 28 August. Additional trees/shrubbery were also removed from along the rear boundary of the site. The additional loss of an established and attractive hedgerow at the front of the site is of further concern. The woodland and rural character of Woodlands Road and its street scene - where the typology is for front areas enclosed by significant hedges - would be grossly harmed by the proposed hedging.

4. Of traffic and parking concern (contrary to policies D1, D6, T1 and T2)

The committee considers that allowing the proposed shared access to the site would set an extremely unwelcome precedent for Woodlands Road. It would be unsightly, could compromise the safety of road users and provide the potential for conflict between residents of 31 and 31a Woodlands Road. The proposed access arrangement would be completely out of character with surrounding properties which have private accesses and garages. Inadequate parking on-site is likely to lead to parking overspill onto Woodlands Road, thereby compromising visibility and affecting the safety of drivers and pedestrians.

5. Of concern regarding the privacy of neighbours (contrary to policy D4)

The proposed new three-storey dwelling does not provide for a reasonable level of privacy for existing neighbours. This has been exacerbated by the unscheduled removal of the mature cherry tree from the garden of 31 Woodlands Road, which has left neighbouring residents in the single-storey bungalows at 2 and 3 Appletree Close feeling particularly exposed. The proposed new dwelling would overlook the homes and gardens of neighbouring residents and affect their enjoyment of their properties.

6. Detrimental to the existing drainage system (contrary to policy D10)

The existing drainage system, thought to have been established in the 1930s, already serves three houses and neighbouring residents are concerned about its ability to cope with a fourth.

7. Contrary to the policies of the emerging Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP)

The emerging SCNDP is seeking to ensure that future housing developments in Sonning Common are appropriate, sustainable and in keeping with the character of the area and residents' wishes. It is aiming to define when any future developments would harm character – especially when the density of proposed new housing would exceed that of the surrounding properties.

Existing residents, who attended the planning meeting, spoke in length about their concerns over this proposed new development. Their main concerns are summarised as follows:

That the proposed new development was inappropriate and represented an over-development of the site; was out of character with the surrounding area; of poor design; adversely affected the privacy and amenity use of neighbouring residents; provided an unwelcome shared access with 31 Woodlands Road and an “open car park” on-site. There was further concern over additional pressure being placed upon the 1930s drainage system, the removal of an established cherry tree and the use of excessive hard landscaping at the front of the proposed property.

In summary, Sonning Common Parish Council’s planning committee is not opposed to the principle of there being some development on this site (perhaps a sympathetically done extension to 31 Woodlands Road). However, this proposal is wholly inappropriate for the site, contrary to numerous planning policies and is causing a great deal of local concern. The committee urges you, in the strongest possible terms, to refuse this application.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ros Varnes', written in a cursive style.

Ros Varnes
Deputy Clerk, Sonning Common Parish Council (On behalf of the planning committee)