

REF: 21/03644/OUT

Location: OS Parcel 6372 South East Of Milestone Farm

15 November 2021

Good morning,

Thank you for engaging Thames Valley Police at this early stage. I have reviewed the submitted documents and crime statistics for the area. I appreciate this project is at a very early stage, however I was somewhat disappointed to see that crime prevention and community safety is not a significant consideration at this point. I do have some concerns with the indicated layout, and unfortunately am unable to support this application in its current form. I detail my concerns below, with detailed guidance provided further down in this report.

Plots 1-4

I have concerns that the vulnerable side and rear boundary for plots 1-4 is vulnerable, with an area of easily accessible yet ambiguous green space directly adjacent that lacks any surveillance. I also have concerns with the proposed alleyway/FOG between the two buildings, again an area left vulnerable to crime and ASB due to a lack of surveillance. This route may also create excessive permeability within the private parking court. I have the same concerns for the proposed alleyway between plots 24-27 and 37-40. These alleyways should be removed.



Plots 32-34

I do not believe the block of 6 tandem parking spaces will function as intended. Directly accessed from the street this proposal creates a risk of pedestrians and other vehicles coming into conflict with reversing vehicles trying to access these spaces. Particularly considering the tandem element, these spaces are going to be an inconvenient parking provision for the residents of these plots, with the likelihood being only one space will be utilised, with the other vehicles being parked on the street, creating a risk of parking and access issues/neighbour disputes. There is a risk of vehicle damage caused by the rear access route running through the parking spaces. This area in general also lacks surveillance, leaving vehicles vulnerable to crime and ASB.



I strongly recommend the applicant to review my advice below, particularly around parking, surveillance and rear/side boundaries, and make necessary changes to layout prior to RM applications being submitted.

At this juncture, I would like to request and encourage the applicant to engage with Thames Valley Police at the earliest, pre-application stage for all forthcoming Reserved Matters applications wherever possible.

In order to safeguard future developments and their residents from crime and antisocial behaviour, I ask that crime prevention and community safety is a key consideration which is specifically addressed within forthcoming applications. I strongly encourage the applicant to consult the guidance provided by Secured By Design, and use the principles contained within the design guides to inform the design of the development, designing out crime from the outset. The principles of CPTED should be incorporated throughout the scheme. The guides for homes, schools and commercial areas can be found here:

<https://www.securedbydesign.com/guidance/design-guides>

I also provide the following general comments to ensure forthcoming applications meet the requirements of;

- The National Planning Policy Framework 2020 paragraph 91(b); which states that Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2020, paragraph 127(f) which states that; 'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible... and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience'.
- MHCLG's Planning Practice Guidance on 'Design', which states that; 'Although design is only part of the planning process it can affect a range of objectives... Planning policies and decisions should seek to ensure the physical environment supports these objectives. The following issues should be considered: safe, connected and efficient streets... crime prevention... security measures... cohesive & vibrant neighbourhoods.'

Parking

Wherever possible, in curtilage parking is preferred. In any case, a parking space must be covered by active surveillance from the dwelling that it serves, providing parked vehicles with a capable and appropriate guardian. Locating parking to the rear boundary of the plot should be avoided, as it restricts the opportunities for surveillance and leaves vehicles vulnerable to crime.

As rule, parking courts should be avoided as they can attract those intent on crime and antisocial behaviour. Rear parking courts should be completely avoided, as they undermine the security provided by a secure perimeter block. They are often poorly lit with a lack of surveillance, providing access to vulnerable side and rear boundaries, which is the point of entry for the majority of residential burglaries. Parking courts are often abandoned by residents (especially after incidents have occurred) in favour of parking in front of dwellings where people can see and actually want to park their vehicles, leading to conflict between neighbours, parking on footways and access problems. Recessed areas and a lack of surveillance within parking courts creates an ideal gathering location for non-residents to meet whilst providing a legitimate excuse to be there.

Where parking courts are necessary (such as for apartment blocks), to mitigate the issues mentioned above it will be critical that:

- The parking courts are well lit with column lighting - lighting in parking court areas is a contentious issue as the question around who pays for the power usually arise, therefore these column lights will need to be fed from the adopted highway.
- Tree planting within parking courts must be a clear stemmed variety clear to at least 2m to facilitate clear sightlines and surveillance, and they must be designed and located holistically with the lighting scheme to avoid shadowing and pooling of light.
- Bollard lighting is not appropriate and must not be used, as they can be damaged by reversing vehicles and more critically they do not provide sufficient light at the right height to aid facial recognition and reduce the fear of crime. It does not deter crime and antisocial behaviour.

- They must have a high level of active surveillance from adjoining dwellings, and defensible space must be provided between the parking bays and any abutting property boundary.
- Defensible space must also be provided to the boundaries of properties forming the entrance to a parking courts.
- Parking spaces within parking courts must be directly adjacent to the property that they serve.
- All spaces within parking courts must be allocated – no casual or visitor parking should be provided within a private parking court. Unallocated parking makes it difficult for future residents to identify and challenge the presence of an offender or suspicious activity and is inappropriate in a rear parking court.
- Visitor parking should be provided on-street where it is covered by surveillance from surrounding dwellings.
- Parking courts must not be excessively permeable, and should only have one single combined entry and exit point.
- The entrance to a parking court must be overlooked by active surveillance.
- Where on-street parking is provided, it must be located where it is overlooked by active surveillance from dwellings.
- Where coach house/FOG style entrances are utilised as entrances to private parking courts, these should be secured by electronic gated access.

Defensible Space

There should be clear definition between the public and private realm. Where the public or semi-private realm adjoins private areas of the development, defensible space should be provided. This will provide an area of 'stand-off', marking the change of ownership and therefore the acceptable activity that is associated with it, protecting the privacy and security of occupants whilst reducing the potential for neighbourhood disputes. This is particularly important where parking areas or public spaces abut vulnerable side or rear residential boundaries. Side and rear boundaries are the entry point for the majority of residential burglaries, and should be secured within a secure perimeter block wherever possible to prevent easy access.

Surveillance

It is vital that public areas are well overlooked by natural surveillance from surrounding dwellings, and active frontage to all streets and to neighbouring open spaces should be a key aim in all developments. Surveillance should be provided at ground floor level from active rooms within dwellings. Active rooms include Living rooms and kitchens, which are most likely to be occupied throughout the day. Blank gable ends that face the public realm must be avoided, as they can be attractive to crime and antisocial behaviour. Corner turning plots should be orientated to exploit and maximise the surveillance opportunities they provide.

Communal residences

If apartment blocks are to be included in forthcoming applications, I ask that these follow the best practice recommendations of Secured by design, and details of proposed building security arrangements including access controls and secure mail services should be included within the application. Unrestricted access to apartment blocks should not be possible, and residential access should be controlled by a two-way audio visual system with remote access controls. No trade button should be present. A secure lobby should be provided to all communal entrances. Residents should only have access to areas of the development they have a legitimate need to access. Depending on the size of the apartment block, secure lobbies should also be extended to each floor to enable effective compartmentation.

Postal services should not have unrestricted access to private communal areas, and mail delivery should be provided within a secure lobby at the entrance to the building, or via "Through the wall" letterboxes.

Merged cores within apartment blocks

Lift/Stairwell cores should not be merged i.e. two or more cores accessing the same area. Merged cores provide permeability through the development undermining access controls and creating a circular movement within the development which is beneficial to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Bin and cycle stores

Residential bin and cycle stores should ideally be located within the secure boundary of the property. Where this is not possible, they should be located where they are covered by good natural surveillance, but cannot be used as a climbing aid over a boundary. Internal bin stores should be robustly secured with a single leaf door to a minimum standard of LPS 1175 SR1.

Public Open Space

Areas of POS/play should be designed and located to incorporate a high level of natural surveillance from neighbouring dwellings. The occupants of these dwellings could act as capable guardians to play areas, but need to be able to observe the area from active rooms in the dwellings to do so effectively. Clear stem trees (clear to 2m), and hedging maintained below 1m should be used in the planting to facilitate clear sightlines. Areas of green space adjoining the highway must also have sufficient landscaping and/or design features to prevent unauthorised vehicle incursion, to protect them from illegal encampments.

Lighting

Lighting throughout the development should meet the general standards of BS5489-1:2020. Lighting plans should be provided which should set out how this standard will be achieved not only on adopted highways, but also un-adopted roads and parking courts. Note above, parking court lighting should be included within the plan, and be fed from the main highway. Bollard lighting is not an appropriate lighting method, and should be avoided. Not only can they be damaged by reversing vehicles, more critically they do not provide sufficient light at the right height to aid facial recognition and reduce the fear of crime. It also does not deter crime and antisocial behaviour.

Rear access routes

Rear access routes must be secured to the front of the building line, and secured with a robust key operated lock operable from both sides. Rear access routes should be singular and must not run in parallel with the rear access for another plot. Shared rear access points should be avoided, but where they are unavoidable they should serve no more than 4 dwellings.

Excessive permeability

Excessive permeability introduces anonymity, making it difficult for residents to identify and challenge who should or shouldn't be there. Residential areas should primarily be formed of secure perimeter blocks, which protects the vulnerable side and rear boundaries of properties. Clear and direct routes through developments are important, but they should not undermine the defensible space of neighbourhoods:

Maximising Legitimate Activity - Perhaps the most important factor is that footpaths should have a high level of legitimate usage, deterring those intent on crime and anti-social behaviour with the risk of being observed or challenged. To ensure pathways become well used, they must lead to places people need to go, preventing desire lines through the development likely to undermine private space. They should promote a feeling of being a 'safe route' encouraging their usage further. Providing an excessive number of footpaths through developments dilutes activity and usage levels, leaving them vulnerable to crime and anti-social behaviour and providing a network of escape routes for an offender.

Maximising Surveillance - To help deter those intent on crime and anti-social behaviour footpaths should in general terms be as straight and as wide as possible, maximising surveillance along the route and allowing people to pass with ease. Landscaping should support clear sightlines and take into consideration surveillance from the residential dwellings (incorporating visibility from active rooms) to the public realm and vice versa.

Identifying Primary Routes – It is important that primary pedestrian routes required to navigate the site on a day to day basis are identified. These must be located where sufficient surveillance and lighting can support them to deter crime and anti-social behaviour and provide the user with a sense of security. Those located where lighting or surveillance will be restricted due to ecology and landscaping requirements should be avoidable if the user wishes.

Cycle routes

The principles in terms of the footpaths and pedestrian access should also be applied to these cycle ways. Providing dual purpose routes (pedestrian/cyclist) would be beneficial in attracting higher levels of legitimate activity and casual surveillance and should be promoted.

If you have any specific queries or require advice on a particular matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I hope that you find my comments of assistance in determining the application and if you or the applicants have any queries relating to CPTED in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
Kevin Cox.