

# Design and Conservation

## Cherwell District Council

### Design Advice

Application Number	14/01366/REM
Applicant's Name	Dorchester Group Ltd
Application Type	Reserved Matters to 10/01642/OUT
Location	Former Building 32 and Adj Land at Hayford Park Camp Road
Case Officer	Andrew Lewis

### **Reserved Matters- Application 14/01366/REM - Erection of 74 dwellings with associated car-parking, infrastructure and public open space**

#### 1. Introduction/Background

Outline permission 10/01642/OUT was granted in 2011 for up to 752 new residential dwellings at 'Heyford Park'. An illustrative masterplan for the proposal was prepared by Scott Brownrigg and a Design and Access Statement was submitted showing the general location of new development and setting out the core design principles. A Design Code for Heyford Park (v5.2) was subsequently prepared and agreed pursuant to Condition 8 of the outline permission.

A pre-application meeting was held in August 2014 and urban design input was provided on behalf of Cherwell Council by my predecessor Clare Mitchell. This input was captured in an email from Andrew Lewis to Ian Barraton dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014. I met with the applicant on 7<sup>th</sup> October to discuss the applicants responses to initial feedback and to comment on a revised layout drawing (014/085/SP/C) received 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014

#### 2. Site/Context

The site is located within Character Area 8 – Core Housing East on the site of existing Building 32 to the north of Camp Road. The development is accessed via the Officers housing to the south, an area described as a 'leafy suburb' setting of grass and organised tree planting. The site also backs onto existing bungalows to the east and the airfield to the north.

Public open space is located to the south and west of the site. Larsden Road Park forms the south boundary to the site and is recognised as a key space of historic significance in the Code (p19). Larsden Road Park is proposed to accommodate one of two LEAPs serving Heyford Park. Airfield Park is separated from the site by an existing access road and is proposed to accommodate a LAP.

#### 3. Policy/Guidance

The application is accompanied by a Design Code (V5.2) as required by Condition 8 to Outline Permission 10/01642/OUT. In accordance with Condition 8 – all subsequent development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved design code.

The site is defined as 'Character Area 8 – Core Housing – East' in the Code and detailed guidance is provided including a proposed framework plan showing a basic layout.

The site is entirely located within the RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area. Under the CA Appraisal 2006 the area is defined by three functional character areas with the site being located within the 'Technical Area' with the 'Flying Field' to the north and the 'Residential Area' to the east and south.

#### 4. Design Assessment

The application is accompanied by a Design Code Compliance Statement but does not address the issues raised at the pre-application meeting as set out in the aforementioned email.

Having regard to the Design Code (specifically the site design criteria and framework plan at pages 103/105) and to the advice provided by email and at our 7<sup>th</sup> October meeting, the following outstanding issues are noted:

##### *Context/ Connections*

A wider context plan should be provided to illustrate the likely movement patterns to and through the site, including key pedestrian and cycle connections to the new school, village centre, community/sports facilities, public transport etc.

Recommendation: that a context/movement plan is provided.

##### *Layout – Street Types*

The proposed basic layout of streets is consistent with the Design Code and Framework Plan for the site. However, the street types proposed do not conform to the Code.

The Design Code Street Codes (p40) show the ST3 Tertiary Street type serving the two north-south streets and the upper east-west street. The ST3 street type is intended to be formal in nature, serve as the main vehicular route and comprise min 1.8m footpaths either side. Formal street trees and on-street parking bays are considered important elements of this street type (see indicative plan section p42).

The Design Code Street Codes (p40) show the lower east-west link as ST4 Shared Surface/Community Street. The ST4 street type is intended to be more informal in nature and serve small groups of dwellings. Shared surfaces are to be of block paved and bound gravel surfaces with street trees and on-street parking bays arranged more ad hoc.

The proposed square has the potential to become a focal point within the scheme and the principle is supported. However, as currently proposed it is a square for vehicles and pedestrians are routed around the edge in a convoluted and unsatisfactory manner. It is recommended that pedestrians become the focus of the square and that the landscape design gives priority to pedestrians in this space. Visitor parking should be removed from the square and provided on-street in parallel parking bays elsewhere.

Recommendation: the proposed street design is revised to reflect the street types in the code and to reflect the key movement patterns as identified above. The square should be redesigned to remove visitor parking and prioritise pedestrian movement.

##### *Layout – Street Frontages*

The Design Code Framework Plan (p105) prescribes E3 Landscape Frontage and E4 Park Street typologies through the site with different build-out ratios and setback variations to each street type (p61). The current proposal shows little variation of street types through the scheme. In accordance with the E4 Type there should be a build out ratio of 70-90% with a consistent building line to the street through the majority of the scheme with min set-back between 1-4m. Where the E3 type is applicable (south-east) a lower build out ratio of 65-70% is expected, varied building lines and more generous set-back of 4-6m.

Recommendation: greater consistency with the Code is recommended with clear differentiation between the frontage treatments in respect of build-out ratio, building lines and set-back. Allowance for smaller set-back on E4 streets supports recessed on-plot parking and on-street parallel parking.

### *Layout - Buildings*

The framework plan identifies key corners and new landmark building locations at the entries to the site from the south and along the western side to the adjacent open space. The intent of the code is that key corners are focal points that should provide animation and surveillance with both sides of the development parcel facing the public realm, and landmarks are designed to be distinctive from adjacent built form. A rendered corner building occupies plots 53-54. It is recommended that a rendered corner building also occupies plots 2-3 on the opposite corner to collectively provide the required landmark feature. Other corners would also benefit from specific corner buildings in accordance with the code although not all corner buildings need be the same or be rendered.

Recommendation: key corners should be better addressed with buildings that turn-the-corner to avoid blank facades to the street. An additional corner building in rendered finish should occupy plots 2-3 to provide a landmark. Larger detached properties could be used to occupy key sites.

### *Building Type and Form*

The overall net density of the scheme is approx. 10 dpha higher than anticipated by the code. While efficient use of land is encouraged, the consequence of higher density in this instance is that there is a lack of variation in house size (all small 2-3 bed) and type (all attached). Small private cul-de-sacs are created where units are arranged perpendicular to the main street network and car parking has been pushed out to the front and will now dominate some of the street frontages. The overall effect is to create a crammed appearance in contrast to the 'leafy suburban' character of the adjacent Officers/SNCO's family quarters to the south and bungalows in generous plots to the east.

Recommendation: greater variation in housing size and type is proposed across the site, potentially incorporating some larger 4 bedroom and/or detached properties interspersed with groups of smaller semi-detached and terrace units. Longer terraces of 4-6 units could ensure housing numbers are maintained. On-plot parking to the front of units should be minimised as far as possible with greater use of recessed garages to the side of units and replacement with trees and landscaping to the front to better reflect the prevailing character. Parking for mid-terrace properties could be provided on-street.

### *Elevations/ Building Details*

The Code requires that wherever possible windows to habitable rooms should front onto the street and public realm. At ground floor this means lounges or dining rooms. The current proposal shows all lounges located at the rear of the units and kitchens and WC's to the front. There is a need to vary the internal layout of some dwellings to provide natural surveillance from habitable rooms to the street at ground floor and to take advantage of access to sunlight where properties are south-facing. Plots 13-17, 35-46 and 53-63 all have north facing lounges.

Six plots present blank side walls onto the street. The Code requires that there are no blank walls onto the street and public realm. This could be resolved through better use of corner buildings as above.

The Code allows for occasional chimney's to act as building features through the scheme. None are currently proposed. Chimneys could be used to help articulate landmark and feature buildings but only where they have a functional purpose.

In respect of design detail, the Code sets out the vision for simple Arts and Crafts character which can be found in Carswell Circle and the Officers housing. Having regard to these characteristics and to the Conservation Area status of the site, the following recommendations are made:

- The brick dentil course is considered to be an unnecessary detail and could be removed with plain brick or rendered finish extended up to the eaves;
- Where kneeler/corbeling details are proposed they should be of matching brick to the exterior. Pre-cast concrete features should be avoided;

- Window header details should be finished in matching brick to the exterior;
- Ground floor window casements should be of equal or greater size than those at first floor to ensure a proportionate balance on the front facades;
- Door design should be consistent throughout the scheme; and
- WC windows on the front elevations should be removed where possible.

Recommendation: greater variation in the internal layout of some units should ensure that some habitable rooms front the street to provide natural surveillance and benefit from access to sunlight where south-facing. Blank walls to streets should be replaced by corner buildings and building elevations should be enhanced by careful consideration of window placements and consistent and simple detailing.

### *Materials*

The basic palette of materials is consistent with the Code. However, changes in brick type along street sections should be avoided with groupings of consistent finish preferred.

Recommendation: avoid interchanging brick type between dwellings and group together to ensure consistent street fronts.

### *Landscaping*

No landscape plan has been provided despite this being requested at the pre-application stage. The landscape plan should include details for the public open space if within the site boundary and demonstrate how tree loss from the site has been mitigated. It is understood that details of the cat/dog proof fence have been received and this will be reviewed separately.

Recommendation: provide a landscape plan for the scheme and for the public open space.

### *Parking*

The Code allows six of the nine parking typologies (Types 2- 4, 6, 8-9) to be used in CA8. Perpendicular parking (Type 4) is permitted where it is separated by landscaping and/or footways into maximum rows of four bays. I would consider this type of parking to be overused on the current proposal resulting in streets and properties unacceptably dominated by parking. I would also consider a number of the plots, particularly the mid-terrace plots, to be too narrow to accommodate two spaces resulting in unacceptable pedestrian access to front doors.

The proposed parking court serves five units at present. The Code allows it to serve up to 8 units. To make best use of the space and infrastructure and to reduce the extent of parking to the front of properties, the courtyard could be expanded to serve additional properties to the north.

Visitor parking would be better distributed around the site and on-street parallel parking provided for residents and visitors.

Shared and private footpaths to the rear of properties are currently shown as unsecured on the plan. Any path for private/ semi-private use to the side or rear of properties should be secured.

Recommendation: that the prevalence of perpendicular parking to the front of units is significantly reduced by either a reduction in the number of spaces provided (Code allows for 1 space per two-bed unit) and/or a reduction in the number of properties. On-plot parking to the side of units and/or on-street parking is preferred allowing for clear defined boundaries between plots. Footpaths to front doors should be direct and uninhibited and footpaths to the rear of properties should be secured. Better use could be made of the proposed parking court.

## 5. Conclusion

Having reviewed the proposal as above, I consider that it currently fails to meet a number of mandatory and advisory aspects of the approved Design Code for Heyford Park. It is considered that the proposal is not yet of the overall form or quality envisaged by the Outline Permission Masterplan or subsequent Design Code and should be *refused*.

The above assessment includes recommendations to resolve the identified issues.

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Date	08 October 2014
Other Information	It must be stressed that these comments cannot constitute a formal determination under the 'Town and Country Planning Act 1990', or the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990' and that it contains only informal, officer advice, which cannot prejudice any subsequent decision of the Local Planning Authority.