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Your contact
is: Ethne Humphreys, Planning

Dear Paul,

Consultation on your application no: P17/S0764/O
Application type: Adjacent Authority Consultation

Address: The Piggery, Gravel Hill, Caversham, RG4 8QL

Proposal: Change of land use from workshop to residential. Demolish existing workshop and store. Construct 2 storey detached house, and retaining walls, landscape garden and parking area.

Applicant: Mr Stephen Pitts

I refer to the consultation of the above application which was received on **9th March 2017**.

Reading Borough Council has a number of concerns and recommendations as follows:

The application site is on the periphery of Reading Borough, where there is great pressure for additional housing in both Reading and South Oxfordshire. Consequently the land adjacent to the northern Reading Borough Council boundary has acquired a lot of interest such as the residential development proposed at land off Peppard Road, Emmer Green (SODC reference P16/S3630/O). It is noted that the District Plan, covering the plan period to 2031, excludes development on the Reading Borough Council border.

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Notwithstanding the above, it is noted that there do not appear to be any plans provided that indicate how the proposal may - or may not - be viewed from inside Reading Borough's land, e.g from the adjacent Public Open Space, which would certainly help in providing more meaningful comments. With regards to this, the ridgeline of trees and vegetation along the southern boundary affords a certain amount of amenity value, considered to be a visually prominent landscape feature with no obvious signs of development upon this side of the road. This existing tree/vegetation coverage would perhaps ensure that the cross-boundary visual impact of the works would be negligible; however, as discussed further below, it would appear that the majority of these trees and vegetation are proposed to be removed.

Trees/Landscape Character

The information provided by the applicant to South Oxfordshire District Council is very limited in relation to vegetation and tree loss. However, it does state that only four trees are to remain. From aerial and Streetview photos (and previous visits to the site by Reading Borough Council's Natural Environment Team), the application site is well treed/vegetated with the proposal resulting in the loss of the majority of this. In addition, in order to provide visibility splays, vegetation from the frontage will have to be removed creating a wider gap in the hedging along Gravel Hill which is on the edge of a designated Major Landscape Feature.

Whilst reference is made to tree protection zones, no plan has been provided with trees showing their root protection areas accurately plotted in relation to the proposal. It is recognised that this is an outline application but we do not consider that there is sufficient tree details or details about vegetation loss to be able to determine the application with full consideration of its impact on the landscape. Should South Oxfordshire DC be minded to approve the application then we would request conditions to ensure that adequate provision is made for the retention and protection of the trees on site with additional planting, in order to mitigate any trees which are removed to facilitate the development. We would also request conditions to secure landscaping, its maintenance and replacement if it fails.

Highways Implications

The existing use as a workshop is likely to generate similar vehicle movements to that of the proposed dwelling and therefore the principle of the development is acceptable in transport terms.

Access to the site is to be gained from an existing vehicular access and this is deemed acceptable. A visibility splay has been illustrated of 2.4m x 70m in either direction (drawing T.452.01A) which is in excess of the National Standards contained within DfT document Manual for Streets. Given the extensive vegetation that would be removed to accommodate the visibility splays it is considered that they are reduced to reflect actual speeds along this part of Gravel Hill; further clarification would therefore be required by the applicant to reflect this.

The access itself is currently a dirt track and therefore this should be upgraded if permission is to be granted.

Should South Oxfordshire DC be minded to approve the application then we would request conditions stipulating that no dwelling should be occupied until access has been surfaced with a bonded material across the entire width of the access for a distance of 3 meters measured back from the carriageway edge; and, that no development shall be commenced until visibility splays of 2.4 metres by 70 metres

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have been provided at the proposed access. The visibility splay shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions above carriageway level.

Representations Received

CADRA: the Caversham and District Residents Association, wishes to OBJECT to this application because of the significant location of the site. CADRA considers that permitting residential use to the north of Gravel Hill could set a precedent which could increase the difficulty of resisting future proposals to release more land in the vicinity for housing.

Councillor Hopper (Councillor for Thames Ward, Caversham): this is in S. Oxfordshire and there has been pressure from a number of other developers to develop a larger parcel of land adjacent to this site, which has been resisted by local residents (who are all Reading residents) as this is over the border in S.Oxon but has no access to it except on Reading's roads. Reading Borough Council's comments to S.Oxon should reflect this concern, as well as issues over bin lorries (RBC would not collect their rubbish) and also the wider implications of a precedent being set which then made other cross boundary developments more likely, with the associated pressure on Reading schools, doctors surgeries and roads.

Given the above, Reading Borough Council raises an OBJECTION to the application.

If you wish to discuss any of these points please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Ethne Humphreys
Planning Officer
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