

PLANNING STATEMENT
IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING APPLICATION
AT
WYCHWOOD, 4 WYCHWOOD LANE,
HEADINGTON, OXFORD
PREPARED BY
HUW MELLOR BA (Hons) MRTPI



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement is prepared in support of a planning application at the property of Wychwood, 4 Wychwood Lane, Headington, Oxford. It should be read in conjunction with the suite of other supporting documents that sit behind this application, including the Design Statement, Ecological Survey, Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment.
- 1.2 The proposal is made on behalf of the Wychwood Foundation, a charitable Trust. The further supporting document to this application 'Introduction to The Wychwood Foundation', sets out the background detail to the Foundation in full and the aims of this proposal. In short the Foundation looks to deliver a new built development that would provide 9 apartments (in a mix of 1, 2 and 3 beds) in a 2½ storey building as accommodation for occupation by people who are vulnerable in the community and to offer a living environment within, which is supportive and caring to its residents. Two of the apartments would be occupied by careers / support staff, with the other seven apartments offered for sale to a range of variously dependant people. The emphasis on the occupation and day-to-day life within the new development will be focused on the arts and related activities. The development would be served by 22 parking spaces, accessed via a new shared surface access drive from Lewis Close. The existing family dwelling house of 4 Wychwood Lane, served off Wychwood Lane, would remain, and communal access to the extensive garden area at the site would be provided as amenity space for all.
- 1.3 The remainder of this statement will refer to the relevant planning policy framework and the proper planning considerations that flow from that.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires planning applications and appeals to be determined in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise.

Planning Statement

2.2 The Development Plan for the area comprises the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 (adopted November 2005), the Oxford Core Strategy 2026 (adopted in March 2011) and the Sites and Housing Plan 2011-2026 (adopted February 2013). I therefore draw upon the relevant policies of the Oxford Local Plan (OLP) saved by a direction of the Secretary of State pursuant to paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the relevant policies of the Oxford Core Strategy (OCS) and the Sites and Housing Plan (SHP) in the consideration of this Statement. I shall return to them below. First, a consideration of the relevant national planning policies follows.

National Planning Policies

2.3 Government level planning guidance relevant to the consideration of this application is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) of March 2014.

National Planning Policy

2.4 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied (paragraph 1).

2.5 The NPPF sets out that "the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development" (paragraph 6). There are three identified dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental (paragraph 7). These three roles are mutually dependent and considered together, can secure higher social and environmental standards, well designed buildings and place that can improve the lives of people and communities (paragraph 8).

2.6 In the first place then, it is submitted that the redevelopment of an available site such as this, within the residential area of Oxford, putting it into good residential use and providing a mix of some much needed accommodation, in a mix of units, in a carefully and sensitively designed development, must

reasonably be considered to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the locality and Oxford on a wider basis. The additional units will generate jobs in the construction phase, bring more people into the area and generate greater spending capacity, better sustaining local shops and other amenities in particular in the longer term, and deliver useful new units of residential accommodation into the local housing stock that are particularly targeted at the more vulnerable members of our society in this case. The cross economic, social and environmental benefits are obvious and the proposal is therefore a defined sustainable form of development.

- 2.7 Pursuing sustainable developments involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built environment and by widening the choice of accommodation (paragraph 9). This is precisely what this development proposal achieves.
- 2.8 “At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking” (paragraph 14). It goes on to state that for plan making this means that local authorities should positively seek opportunities that arise to meet the development needs for their area and that local planning policies should be applied flexibly whenever possible. It is submitted here that the benefits that accrue from the proposal, plainly represent a positive and sustainable development opportunity for the local area that should be properly supported and the Council apply its relevant policies flexibly as advocated in their considerations.
- 2.9 Paragraph 15 of the NPPF is explicit in its statement that “policies in local plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay”. It has already been demonstrated above that the proposal does plainly represent a sustainable form of development, by definition.
- 2.10 A list of “core planning principles” within the planning system are then identified in the NPPF, that should “underpin both plan making and decision

taking" (paragraph 17). Those considered most relevant to the terms of this proposal include:

- Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- Not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable;
- Take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

The proposal and its related benefits satisfy the above criterion.

- 2.11 Paragraph 49 states that new housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. As stated, this proposal is plainly a sustainable form of development.
- 2.12 Paragraph 50 requires that a wide choice of high quality homes should be made, across all tenures in order that opportunities for home ownership and the creation of sustainable inclusive and mixed communities is delivered. The scheme with its provision of a mix of accommodation unit sizes and types, in its particular form of specialist provision does just that.
- 2.13 "The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment" and considers that "good design is a key aspect of sustainable development" and is "indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people" (paragraph 56). The submitted scheme is very carefully designed, specifically produced in such a fashion so

as to fit comfortably and indeed positively with the site's sylvan surroundings. It makes for an appropriate design solution to the site and its identified local context as the Design & Access Statement sets out in full consideration and detail.

2.14 The NPPF requires that planning decisions should aim to ensure new developments deliver high quality schemes, judged across a range of fronts (paragraph 58):

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses, including incorporation of green and other public spaces as part of the development;
- Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality or life or community cohesion;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

The scheme is very carefully designed to accord with all of these aims.

2.15 Paragraph 60 states that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to

conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. The scheme has evolved through a careful analysis of the character of the area, and is an appropriate, proportionate and characterful response in this respect.

- 2.16 Paragraph 61 then goes on to say that although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment. The proposal, with its proportionate and characterful new build appearance, that is reflective in its choice of building materials and aesthetic style, does positively integrate the development into its site context and its sense of place in the landscape setting of the site.

Local Planning Policies

- 2.17 There are a raft of locally based policies contained in the saved OLP, OCS and SHP that work between them towards the proper consideration of this proposal. Those considered of relevance are set out below with a brief commentary.
- 2.18 Policies CP1, CP6, CP8, CP9, CP10, CP11 and CP13 of the OLP, CS18 of the OCS and HP9 of the SHP can be read together in that they generally seek a good standard of urban design in new development that relates to the character and appearance of the area and its context. The scheme is fully cognisant of this raft of related design based policies. The Design & Access Statement goes to the heart of these policies in detail.
- 2.19 Policy CS23 of the OCS looks for a mix of new accommodation within any locality and across Oxford as a whole and is supported by the Council's Balance of Dwellings (BODS) Supplementary Planning Document, which between them look to ensure a satisfactory mix of dwelling sizes in any new development, according to the different requirements for each identified

neighbourhood area. In this case, the provision of a mix of 4 x 3 bed units, 3 x 2 bed units and 2 x 1 bed units would add to the diversity of the housing types in the local area, and satisfy the specific terms of the policy. The policy for this area (being an 'amber' area in the BODS document) requires that 30% - 100% of properties should be 3 bed units. The 4 x 3 bed units out of nine units overall, equates to a 44% provision. The 3 x 2 bed units meet the 0% - 50% requirement of such units, at 30%. The 2 x 1 bed units meet the 0% - 30% requirement in turn, at 22%. The proposal is thus BODS compliant.

- 2.20 Policy HP14 of the SHP (and linked Appendix 7) prescribe a 45°/25° code as a measure of neighbourliness, including consideration of possible loss of light, privacy and outlook. The careful design and siting of the scheme in terms of the aligned building line position of the new terrace of units, alongside the retained 4 Wychwood Lane is entirely neighbourly in these terms, specifically designed to meet the 45° code requirements in relation to the existing house. Additionally, given the good distance of separation of the block of new apartments from the nearest other houses in Lewis Close (no 7) and Wychwood Lane (no 5) means there can be no serious considerations of unneighbourly impact to consider. In addition, the relative good separation distances between the cited properties, well in excess of the Council's 22m back-to-back rule of thumb, means there would be no proper issues of overlooking or loss of privacy. The new proposed parking and access areas are kept contained by a combination of new planting and fencing along the common boundaries to limit any possible noise and nuisance from what is in any event a relatively small parking / access area. Some of the parking is proposed under the new building too, in order to further assist and contain possible noise / nuisance.
- 2.21 Policy HP13 of the SHP sets out the Council's general expectations for garden space in new residential developments and requires it to be 'adequate' in terms of usability, proximity to the properties, privacy, layout, orientation etc. All of the units have access to their own private terrace / balcony spaces plus of course, communal access (as is the full intention of the proposal) to an extensive garden area that runs away in part even, up into the adjoining Shotover Woods. There cannot be any serious consideration

other than that the provision of amenity space on the site is more than adequate.

- 2.22 Policies CS9 of the OLS and HP11 of the SHP seek to ensure that new residential developments are as energy efficient as possible. In this instance, the new building will be designed to achieve the latest building regulations requirements, including the sourcing of all materials locally wherever possible and the use of energy efficient fittings and appliances throughout.
- 2.23 Policies TR3 (and linked Appendix 3) of the OLP, Policy CS13 of the OCS and Policy HP16 (and linked Appendix 8) of the SHP, together deal with the provision of car parking in relation to new developments. 22 parking spaces are shown proposed off the new shared surface access from Lewis Close in full compliance with the required standards for this level of development.
- 2.24 Policy TR4 of the OLP (and linked Appendix 4) and Policy HP15 of the SHP cover the provision of on-site cycle parking. 22 secure cycle parking spaces are provided on site, as the policy requirement for this level of development.
- 2.25 Policy HP4 sets out that an affordable housing contribution will normally be required from new housing developments of 4-9 dwellings, unless it can be demonstrated that to do so would render the scheme unviable. A Viability Statement on this will be forwarded to the Council as soon as it is available which will seek to demonstrate that a full affordable housing provision will render this proposal unviable.
- 2.26 Finally, Policy CS22 of the OCS requires that Oxford keep up to date for the period 2006-2026, an annual delivery rate of a minimum of 400 new dwellings. With land an increasingly finite resource in a constrained Oxford context, the availability of a small, windfall site such as this one, which is readily deliverable in terms of new building provision, should be positively encouraged and held to be in full compliance with the terms of policy CS22. This is most germane now that the Council concedes it cannot deliver all of its housing supply requirements within its current administrative boundaries for the future and is looking to neighbouring Authorities to take an acknowledged

15,000-unit housing demand through to 2031. This is a significant material planning consideration that weighs squarely in favour of the proposal.

3.0 MAIN PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

- 3.1 The proposal involves the provision of additional residential accommodation within the existing area of Oxford, on a windfall site and in a location which is accessible and sustainable in its provision.
- 3.2 The principle, at least of this development, must be reasonably accepted.

Sustainable Form of Development

- 3.3 At the heart of the Government's planning strategy, is the requirement for 'sustainable' development.
- 3.4 In this case the proposal delivers an entirely sustainable form of development across the full range of fronts:
 - It involves the use of a windfall site, within the midst of an existing residential area;
 - It provides a mix of residential units, increasing the variety of available housing in the locality, thereby making for an inclusive residential scheme;
 - This all takes place in an accessible area of Oxford, with ready access to the local bus network that runs within Risinghurst, and on into Oxford. Plus, the local district centre of Headington is within ready cycling distance for convenient access to the full range of shops, services and employment opportunities. There is in turn a local parade of shops at the nearby Green Road roundabout within walking distance for daily, small shopping top ups.

- 3.5 The proposal is precisely the sort of sustainable residential development that the Government now positively promotes in the NPPF.

Neighbour Impact

- 3.6 The scheme has been designed to be neighbourly all round.
- 3.7 The new building is positioned set well away from the surrounding neighbouring houses, well beyond the usual 22m rule of thumb separation distance, such that there cannot be any serious considerations of loss of privacy / overlooking from the new building.
- 3.8 The new access route from the end of the Lewis Close cul-de-sac would only be lightly trafficked by the 9 units involved. Plus, the new route is designed as a shared surface, so vehicle speeds would be necessarily slow and therefore possible noise nuisance kept to a minimum by the slow passage of the vehicles over the new access, within the site.
- 3.9 The residential use proposed is otherwise compatible of course with the residential use of the existing housing that stands already around the site.

Car Parking and Access

- 3.10 Car parking is provided over the site to the required standards, in a combination of 2 banks of surface parking and some undercroft parking too.
- 3.11 The new vehicular access to the site is taken off Lewis Close, as stated above, whilst the existing vehicular access off Wychwood Lane is retained for use by 4 Wychwood Lane, the host dwelling.
- 3.12 Cycle parking is provided on the site as well to the required standards and assists to make best use of the accessible location of this site.

Amenity Space

- 3.13 Each of the proposed units are provided with a combined use of private balcony / terrace areas and communal use of the large site grounds. This more than exceeds the policy requirement.

4.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The principle of the residential development of this available, windfall site, in the midst of the existing residential area of Oxford must be one that can be reasonably supported in the clear circumstances.
- 4.2 The proposal represents an appropriate, proportionate and fully characterful development, most mindful of the identified context of the site and its locality and which sits readily on the overall plot.
- 4.3 The scheme provides a mix of new accommodation, tailored to a much needed sector of society, across the site, and is a fully inclusive development.
- 4.4 Car parking is provided on the site to standard.
- 4.5 On-site amenity space across the site meets policy requirements.
- 4.6 Cycling parking and bin storage are proposed to standard.
- 4.7 The viability report, when submitted, is set to demonstrate that an affordable housing contribution to full policy requirements is not properly justified in the circumstances.
- 4.8 The site stands in the midst of a fully accessible location and is an eminently sustainable form of development, as positively supported by the relevant terms of the NPPF.
- 4.9 In view of all the foregoing, it is very much hoped that this application can be supported and the planning permission applied for, granted.