

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF
Mr. AGRON NUZI

REGARDING A PROPOSAL FOR 2
ONE BED FLATS

AT

16 GENTIA ROAD, BLACKBIRD LEYS, OXFORD
OX4 6QE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mr. Nuzi seeks planning permission for two x one bed flats, built as if forming an extension on the side of No. 16 Gentian Road, Blackbird Leys, Oxford.

1.2 The purpose of this statement is to explain this proposed scheme and to assess the merits in relation to relevant local and national planning policies and design guides. We then summarise the case and request planning permission be granted subject to all appropriate planning conditions.

1.3 In preparing the design we were aware of other completed developments in the nearby area, which can be closely compared with our proposals. Briefly put, it is our view that these and this current application scheme are closely similar in all respects, have designs that respect the visual character of the group and the setting, and provide much needed housing in a way that does not detract from the amenities of the immediate neighbours.

1.4 This current application not only includes a design in keeping with the existing terrace of homes, it also includes private gardens that are well in excess of minimum sizes agreed by the council. Both flats will have separate access, bin stores and cycle bays, and comply with all local and national space standards. These flats are also provided with one off street parking space. Further elements in this design are referred to later in this statement.

1.5 The remainder of this statement therefore refers to relevant planning policies, an assessment of how the proposal satisfies these policies, and a summary of the planning merits of this case for two small scale and much needed flats.

1.6 A brief list of the relevant planning issues may be as follows:

2. KEY PLANNING ISSUES

2.1 In our view the key planning issues are

- The principle and sustainability of new housing in Oxford.
- The type of housing proposed.

- Compliance with all relevant policies.
- The detailed design of the scheme in relation to the site and its surroundings
- The amount of nature enhancement proposed for the site

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSALS in relation to RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES.

3.1 This is not intended as an exhaustive cover of all policies and guidelines, the case officer will advise what these are in the planning report. It is simply to show our understanding of how this proposal satisfies the current local and governmental advice.

3.2 The following extracts from the National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 regarding sustainable development, underpin the whole planning policy framework, and state that:

“Section : 2. Achieving sustainable development

7. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection⁵.

8. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

*a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

3.3 The above framework and other related statements from the NPPF underpin the local planning policies, their preparation and their implementation. The whole purpose is to achieve sustainable development. We now refer to further NPPF and also local policies as follows:

3.4 The Development Plan for the area includes the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 (adopted November 2005), the Oxford Core Strategy 2016 (adopted in March 2011) and the Sites and Housing Plan 2011-2026 (adopted February 2013).

3.5 Looking at our proposal in relation to the broader aims set out in the NPPF and the above local policy documents, it is clear that the location is a highly sustainable one for much needed smaller scale housing.

3.6 Not only will the proposal help to fill the shortfall in the demand for smaller scale homes, there are other benefits in the build and the occupancy in terms of the local economy. The locality contains a range of convenience services, and access to social , leisure and other shopping available to the occupiers and accessible by foot or cycle or public transport.

3.7 The social mix achieved by adding a modest number of small scale flats in this area is in principle supported by relevant planning policies, it is considered a means of strengthening social cohesion in local communities.

3.8 This only works positively with good design, adequate living space both inside and in separate private garden spaces, all of which we consider are shown within this scheme.

3.9 It is proposed that we enhance the nature within the site, and so in the 3 overriding aims of the NPPF, with this scheme we seek to satisfy the requirements of economic, social and environmental sustainability within any new housing proposal. By achieving in these 3 aims, we expect to satisfy the extract repeated here from Paragraph 10 of the NPPF, which states *“at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.”*

3.10 Housing need - Like all local planning authorities, there is pressure to supply sufficient housing, of the sort that is most in demand locally. This is a particularly acute issue within Oxford itself. The revised July 2021 NPPF in paragraph 68 indicates that small sites like this are an important addition to the local housing needs. The principle of housing, and of this type, in this locality, seems therefore likely to be a positive benefit and wholly compliant with relevant planning policies.

3.11 Often the concern in the case of windfalls using previously developed land is will they fit? How do they relate to the site and its surroundings? Another reference to the NPPF at Paras 117 and 118 make it clear that best use should be made of available sites, and planning considerations should “give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes”. Therefore, our proposal being on a previously developed site, must now be shown in scale and design that it achieves a successful relationship to both the site and the local area.

3.12 Our scheme is understood to satisfy the internal sizes as required by local and national design criteria. The gardens are greater in size than the required standard, the distances from neighbours, orientation of windows all ensure that this proposal can be accommodated without detriment to other nearby residents in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or aspect. It should also be noted that to the south is open land, such that there is no possibility of the site feeling cramped in any way.

3.13 The drawings submitted show these details, it would be possible to further pad out this statement with dimensions, but the case officer does not need these to assess the impact of the detailed design upon the locality.

3.14 Looking at the design and the need to achieve good design, this is referred to in the NPPF at paras 124 and 127 especially. To summarise, a successful design should function well, add to the local design qualities, be visually attractive and sympathetic to the established character and pattern. Strengthening the “sense of place” is also key, making optimum use of the site while achieving a design that is safe with a high standard of amenity.

3.15 These key features are embedded in our scheme, compliance with space standards both in and outside within the ample private garden areas, not overlooked, and so on. Our scheme is in all respects at least as successful as that of others built locally in recent times and we ask that on that basis a similar outcome be achieved by way of a consent with all appropriate planning conditions.

3.16 We ask it also be noted that the family dwelling that is No.16 retains a substantial and private rear garden. Despite loss of the side garden to these proposals, the residents of No. 16 have an ample private space which is not overlooked, this was also a key consideration in our submission. There are two off street spaces retained with No. 16 also.

3.16 Looking at local policies, as said before, it is not our role to mention in great detail all possibly relevant policies, but to highlight those that are seen to be key to understanding our case, and its compliance with relevant planning criteria.

3.17 Presumption in favour of sustainable development is the starting point, this is largely covered in Policy MP1 of the SHP. We see our scheme as not only similar to approved and recently built examples nearby, but also a clear form of sustainable development, well designed flats, of a type highly in demand and in a location that is highly sustainable.

3.18 Policies CP1, CP6, CP8, CP9, CP10, CP11 and CP13 of the OLP, CS18 of the OCS and HP9 of the SHP cover the need for a high standard of good design – the details of our proposal as seen on the drawings show a close relationship

to No. 16, using matching material and fenestration for example, and we hope are seen as satisfying these.

3.19 Adequate amenity space is covered in HP13 of the SHP, we understand the amount provided here complies for one bed flats.

3.20 Energy efficiency is now essential with new development, Oxford City is taking a proactive stance in demanding better standards and rightly so. While the details of this usually are agreed at the building regulations stage, my clients agrees to a planning condition that requires these detailed to be agreed in writing before the development can commence. In this way the proposal is again complying with relevant planning criteria that in this case reduces CO2 emissions.

3.21 We provide off street cycle provision, in separate areas for each flat, in convenient and safe locations as required by HP15 of the SHP.

3.22 We have applied the 45/25 degrees code for light measurement, to ensure no undue loss of light to neighbouring dwellings. No overlooking will result from the proposed flats, overall the levels of privacy are satisfactory and compliant with such as HP14 of the SHP.

3.23 We don't propose to provide detail as to the housing situation in Oxford at present, suffice to say we understand there is a considerable housing shortfall and this is clearly a material consideration when looking at our scheme.

4. A SUMMARISED CONCLUSION

4.1 In brief, this is a small scale housing scheme for 2x one bed flats, closely similar to others recently built nearby.

4.2 The standards of design, gardens, relationship to neighbours all appear to comply with local and national planning policies.

4.3 These are accepted as being of the size of new housing in highest local demand, provided they comply with all relevant space criteria, which we believe they do.

4.4 There is a critical housing shortage in Oxford, the NPPF supports scheme such as this one in helping to reduce the shortfall.

4.5 Other sustainable features such as cycling storage provision, and due to its location, access to facilities without the need to use cars is a given as part of this scheme.

4.5 We understand there are a number of similar and recently built flats which contain the same design features as within this scheme, such as 55A Balfour Road, 12 Clover place, and 113 Normandy Crescent, and are sure there are several others. In other words, we hope that the scheme now proposed that has the same or similar features can be considered in a way that is consistent with these recent decision. The result if approved will be a modest yet positive addition to the much needed housing of this smaller scale, within this part of Oxford.

4.6 This constitutes the optimum use of an available site, a sustainable development that reduces local housing shortfall and we ask that this scheme be approved with all appropriate planning conditions.

END OF STATEMENT