

PLANNING COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 14 DECEMBER 2016

TITLE OF REPORT: BRAMSHILL HOUSE

Report of: HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

Planning Member: Councillor Southern

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update the Committee as to the process on the Bramshill House applications and to request that the Planning Committee agrees to the proposed strategy for dealing with the outstanding planning and listed building applications at Bramshill House. The Officers are seeking a steer from Committee because it is possible that if all outstanding issues can be addressed satisfactorily Officers may recommend the respective applications for approval.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Planning Committee agrees to the strategy set out below for each of the outstanding applications (applications 1, 4, 5 and 6 as listed below) at Bramshill House (applications 2, 3 and 7 are being considered in full separately).

- a) Application 1 - The Committee agrees that further discussions should take place along with the continued analysis of the viability/enabling case put forward for the entire site.
- b) Application 4 - Committee agrees that, whilst the quantum of development still needs to be resolved, the “new build” housing should be broadly located in the area proposed in this application (area shown on the plan in Appendix I).
- c) Application 5 - Committee agrees that discussions surrounding the enabling case continue and that if the quantum of development requested is required that this site is located within the broad area where “new build” housing could be located.
- d) Application 6 - Committee agrees that further analysis of the enabling/viability case is undertaken so that the Council can better understand the quantum of development required. Officers will then be able to attribute the appropriate weight to the applicant’s case when evaluating the harm versus the benefits of this application. However, in the meantime and without prejudice to the outcome of the enabling/viability case, Officers would like to explore whether there are other areas of the site including an expansion of the area covered by applications 4 and 5 which would be less harmful.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 City and Country acquired Bramshill House and its grounds from the Home Office in January 2015 and has been involved in pre-application advice discussions followed by the submission of a total of 7 planning applications and 3 listed building applications.
- 3.2 The application site comprises of the land and buildings of Bramshill House and its associated buildings, park and gardens. Bramshill House is a grade I listed building with other grade I and grade II buildings and structures set within a grade II* registered park and garden. The latter also extends beyond the application site. The site history and background is set out in more detail in the reports in the development applications paper (PAPER C).
- 3.3 A total of seven planning applications and three listed building consent applications have been submitted. The applications have been revised since they were submitted by the submission of additional material or revised statements and appraisals. Three of the applications are alternative options for the House and stable block. There is also a separate application for the provision of the SANG on its own. The applications are:
1. Applications 16/00720/FUL and 16/00721/LBC. Conversion of Bramshill House, the Stable Block and the existing Nuffield Hall, to provide a total of 25 residential units and associated parking. Use of the principal rooms of Bramshill House as a publically accessible museum space.
 2. Applications 16/00722/FUL and 16/00723/LBC. Conversion of Bramshill House, the Stable Block and the existing Nuffield Hall for use as a single dwelling and associated parking.
 3. Applications 16/00724/FUL and 16/00725/LBC. Conversion of Bramshill House, the Stable Block and the existing Nuffield Hall for use as offices, providing 5,196m² of commercial B1(a) space and parking for 175 vehicles.
- All three pairs of applications include the demolition of later curtilage listed buildings and maintenance and restoration works to Bramshill House and gardens. The provision of a 14.4ha SANG is common to the first pair of applications but is not included with the third (office use).
4. Application 16/00726/FUL – Construction of 235 residential units and associated parking, access and landscaping in the area known as The Core which includes; the Quad, Lakeside, Central Area, Walnut Close, Maze Hill and Sandpit Close. Demolition of non-listed listed buildings. Construction of a replacement cricket pavilion. The provision of a new 14.4ha SANG.
 5. Application 16/00727/FUL - Construction of 14 residential units with associated parking, access and landscaping within areas known as Maze Hill and Sandpit Close. The provision of a new 14.4ha SANG.
 6. Application 16/00728/FUL – Construction of 9 residential units with associated parking, access and landscaping within an area known as Pinewood. The provision of a new 14.4ha SANG.
 7. Application 16/01290/FUL - Change of use of land to provide a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) area and associated works
- 3.4 Using the above numbering, applications 2, 3 and 7 (both listed building and planning applications where appropriate) are brought to Committee for a resolution; the reports are in the development applications paper (PAPER C). The remaining

applications (Nos. 1, 4, 5 and 6) are undecided; the issues and recommendations to the Committee for the next steps and actions are detailed below.

- 3.5 The applicants have now requested that the applications for new residential development are assessed as enabling development and the Council is currently exploring in detail the viability/enabling case. Costs currently being explored include any repairs that are required to maintain the building along with the development and building costs associated with each of the options.
- 3.6 It should be noted that the mansion itself lies within 400m of the closest part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Mitigation has been proposed as part of the application which includes provision of a SANG on site. An appropriate assessment will need to be undertaken at the time of determining the application for planning permission however the Committee will note that the application for the single dwelling use of the mansion has been recommended for approval.
- 3.7 The applicant has chosen to submit separate applications for each of the options and whilst the Council could consider each in isolation on their own merits, it is also in the Council's gift to tie the applications together through a legal agreement to achieve the desired outcome which is to find a viable and beneficial use for the site.

4 COMMENTARY

Application 1 – (16/00720/FUL & 16/00721/FUL)

- 4.1 At present there are significant outstanding concerns regarding these proposals. Not only do they involve the subdivision of the house itself there will be extensive works required to the house and the stables in order to facilitate this option. Discussions with the applicant have been ongoing and the applicant has drafted amended plans to reduce the number of flats and increase the amount of the first floor that would be used as a museum. These discussions are to address concerns raised by the Council, Historic England and the National Trust.
- 4.2 The museum use is important as it brings part of the building into public use which is a significant benefit. The first floor rooms have been chosen as they are the principle rooms within the building and perhaps the most difficult to subdivide. These rooms comprise the King's and Queen's apartments and are historically important.
- 4.3 Outstanding issues include the acceptability of the amended plans the associated costs and any conservation deficit caused by the proposals. Rather than refuse the current plans which have their deficiencies, Officers would like the Committee to agree that further discussions should take place along with the continued analysis of the viability/enabling case put forward for the entire site. This is because Officers consider that if resolved there is an opportunity to recommend the application for approval.

Application 4 - 16/00726/FUL

- 4.4 This application involves the redevelopment of the part of the site that currently contains the 20th Century additions built by the Home Office. None of those buildings are listed in their own right. Specifically the area in question lies to the south of the Reading Avenue and to the West of the House and Stable Blocks.
- 4.5 The proposals current include the demolition of many buildings, moving development further away from the Reading Avenue to improve the setting of the house itself and the views between the house and the lake (Water Garden). Some of the existing buildings would be retained and refurbished. Whilst parts of this area are considered previously developed land there are areas where new development will encroach onto 'greenfield' land. In particular development will be closer to the Green Ride than it currently is; the Green Ride is an important feature within the Historic Park and Garden.
- 4.6 Ordinarily it would not be desirable to have new residential development in this remote location which has minimal access to services and infrastructure. Development Plan policies and the NPPF seek to protect such locations against development that is unsustainable. For reference the Council has previously refused permission for the use of some of the ancillary "dwellings" in the grounds for independent use as residential dwellings for this very reason; this application is at appeal which is scheduled for June. In addition, the Council has in excess of a five year housing land supply. Notwithstanding the sustainability issues, as the Council has a suite of applications to consider where an enabling argument has been advanced, it is appropriate to consider this application rather than simply dismiss it on sustainability grounds.
- 4.7 The quantum of development has not yet been agreed with the applicants. The applicants are suggesting that all of the "new-build" housing is required to meet the Conservation deficit; however until such a time that the financial information has been fully assessed the Council is unable to confirm whether or not it agrees with the applicant's position. However, it is clear that no matter which of the options are developed within the house itself, there will be some form of development required.
- 4.8 It should be noted that the applicant is not currently proposing any infrastructure or affordable housing contributions due to viability grounds. Whilst this still needs to be confirmed, as a general principle in applications such as these infrastructure and affordable housing provision are unlikely to be secured without increasing the amount of "new build" housing within the grounds. Additional housing in the grounds will potentially impact negatively on the heritage assets and may not be desirable.
- 4.9 It is requested that the Committee agrees that, whilst the quantum of development still needs to be resolved, the "new build" housing should be broadly located in the area proposed in this application (area shown on the plan in Appendix I). This is because Officers consider that if resolved there is an opportunity to recommend the application for approval.

Application 5 - 16/00727/FUL

- 4.10 As with application 4 this site is located to the south of the Reading Avenue and to the West of the house. The proposed houses would be located on greenfield land and have the same sustainability issues as associated with application 4. The development of greenfield land is less desirable than the redevelopment of the brownfield areas of the site. However, some of the brownfield areas of the site are proposed to be cleared of buildings and the landscape restored as a conservation benefit. As the applicant is making an enabling case and contends that these dwellings are required to fund the conservation deficit it would be reasonable to continue discussions on this application. It is also likely given the scale of the conservation deficit currently being proposed (circa £20 million although this has not been agreed), that some development will encroach onto the 'greenfield' areas of the site. There are areas of the site that are more sensitive than others, for example areas to the north and east/south of the house are particularly sensitive.
- 4.11 Therefore the Committee is asked to agree that discussions surrounding the enabling case continue and that if the quantum of development requested is required that this site is located within the broad area where "new build" housing could be located. This is because Officers consider that if resolved there is an opportunity to recommend the application for approval.

Application 6 - 16/00728/FUL

- 4.12 This proposal involves the erection of nine dwellings to the west of the lake or Water Garden and to the north of the access road (Reading Avenue) into the site. Serious concerns have been raised regarding the location of these dwellings in relation to the impact on the heritage assets. Historic England for example considers that this proposal would cause substantial harm to the heritage assets. The NPPF states that "*Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably ... grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens ... should be wholly exceptional*".
- 4.13 The applicants would contend that the enabling case presented would represent the exceptional circumstances as required by the NPPF. Until the enabling case and the overall quantum of development has been established the appropriate weight cannot be given to the applicant's case.
- 4.14 In relation to this application, the Committee is asked to agree that further analysis of the enabling/viability case is undertaken so that the Council can better understand the quantum of development required. Officers will then be able to attribute the appropriate weight to the applicant's case when evaluating the harm versus the benefits of this application. However, in the meantime and without prejudice to the outcome of the enabling/viability case, Officers would like to explore whether there are other areas of the site including an expansion of the area covered by applications 4 and 5 which would be less harmful. At the moment Officers are not minded to recommend this application for approval.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Council must determine the applications that have been submitted with the desirable outcome being a long-term beneficial and viable reuse of the site. In order to continue proactive dialogue and to give a steer to officers and the applicant, the Committee is requested to agree to the strategy as set out above for each of the outstanding applications.

Contact Details: Emma Whittaker Tel: 01252 774115
email: emma.whittaker@hart.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix I- Plan associated with application 4