

Alex Cresswell – JPPC Chartered Town Planners

App Ref: 20/01120/FUL

Speaking as Agent in support

The application site has recent planning history, as set out in your report. This application has been made to address the previous concerns of the Council – relating to positioning, scale, layout and design.

Crucially, it is now accepted that the application site is a logical infill site within the village, therefore representing 'sustainable' development in line with the Council's strategy for windfall sites across the Local Plan period. There is no objection locally to the principle of housing on this site also.

Previously three much larger dwellings were proposed and, following officer advice, the applicant has reduced the number to two and scaled back the massing and form of the houses.

In addition, the houses have been kept to a 1 to 1.5 storey height and the garages detached and set back, all in line with your officer's requirements.

This has resulted in a much looser-knit development with plenty of breathing space and helps to retain the openness of the land. We welcome that your officers now agree that the quantum and scale of development is acceptable and well related to its immediate neighbours.

Planning guidance seeks opportunities to enhance design and provide improvements in building design and sustainability. The architects have designed a scheme which is a significant improvement and will enhance the streetscene (where visible beyond the trees).

Whilst we note the chief concern of the Parish Council relates to the scale of the houses, the applicant has identified, through commissioning Savills to extrapolate local housing data, a pronounced need for family housing within the village. The Local Plan evidence base also identifies demand for 4 bedroom houses. Smaller bungalows would be at odds with the character of the area, which your officers agree the application design best relates to.

The evidence of need/appropriateness of the houses is best demonstrated by the fact that both houses have already been sold off plan, should planning permission be granted. I must stress as well that any concerns relating to market prices is not a planning consideration.

If planning is granted, the houses will be constructed by a local builder who has a track record of providing high quality housing to an exceptional build standard, incorporating passive house standards. Along with the addition of two family houses to help sustain local services (which is much needed in these testing times) the proposal will also bring economic benefits locally from employing local craftsmen and traders.

The tree retention and additional planting, landscaping and ecological enhancements of the site are all also significant benefits of the proposal.

The applicant has worked tirelessly to find an acceptable drainage solution for the site. Thames Water has confirmed it has no objections from a connection or capacity perspective. The drainage scheme presented is also accepted by your officers.

We hope that you can support this well-conceived proposal.

Objections to 20/01508/FUL – Manor Bungalow, Standlake

The last appeal Inspector raised concerns about ecology and heritage impacts, but the application lacks any arboricultural assessment.

Mature trees border the northeast boundary, forming part of a wider belt extending around the perimeter of the Applicant's whole field. A contextual assessment is required into development impact on this wider landscape.

The Ecological Assessment is defective; it lacks attention to the tree belts, long grasses and scattered scrub. No discussion given of how the wider area relates to the application site, which is defective because:

1. Policy EH3 emphasises importance of promoting conservation of ecological networks;
2. Wild Oxfordshire's website identifies Standlake within a draft 'Nature Recovery Area'.

The Nature Recovery Map will be part of Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Wild Oxfordshire's website states: '*Oxfordshire Plan 2050 provides an opportunity to use the Nature Recovery Map to help plan for nature's recovery at a county-wide level and set the framework for future Local Plans.*

Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Advisory Group proposes the following for Oxfordshire Plan 2050:

- *Support development of an Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy;*
- *Requiring developments in the three nature recovery zones make a positive contribution to nature's recovery – with an ambition to achieve 20% net gain;*
- *Giving the Nature Recovery Network significant weight in planning decisions;*
- *Avoiding major new built development in the Recovery zone;*
- *Protecting/enhancing habitats of importance for nature & strengthening ecological networks;*
- *Improving nature in the Recovery zone;*
- *Investing more in monitoring the change in nature.*

Although in draft, the Nature Recovery Area is of significance given recognition by both the NPPF and Local Plan to biodiversity net gain.

EH3 emphasises the Council will seek all applications to demonstrate net gain in biodiversity, but the assessment makes no mention of what tree species it is intended to plant or how they would be managed. Plans suggest only three trees lost, notwithstanding the previous application suggested four, one retained tree will overhang a conservatory and proximity of the tree belt to Plot 4 would lead to inevitable pressure to fell more trees due to light loss and root damage.

The heritage report appears more robust, but:

- Notwithstanding a slight repositioning of Plot 1, the 2-storey dwelling will be significantly closer The Manor than the bungalow with inter-visibility between the two;
- Whilst Manor Bungalow may not have formed part of the garden curtilage to The Manor, it was always within its ownership and its open nature with enclosing tree belt surrounds consistently formed part of its open heritage setting;
- Intensifying use of the access driveway, which passes the eastern flank of The Manor, and the site with four large houses rather than one bungalow will impact significantly upon the setting of this heritage asset.

Whilst such impacts would be 'less than substantial' it would nevertheless constitute a degree of detriment that the NPPF advises should be afforded substantial weight.

In such circumstances, I urge Members to refuse this application.



**Draft Oxfordshire
Nature Recovery Network**



Key

Nature Recovery Network
 ■ Core Zone
 ■ Recovery Zone
 ■ Wider Landscape Zone

Boundaries
 □ District Boundaries

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LOWLANDS AREA PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

10th August 2020

**The Manor Bungalow, High Street,
Standlake**

20/01508/FUL

Comments made on behalf of the applicant

The Parish Council and some objectors have said that this application is the same as the previously refused scheme. That is not the case. This is an amended scheme which has been designed and presented in the light of the specific comments made by the Inspector when he dismissed the appeal.

The appeal Inspector said the following about the previous scheme:

"...the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area."

"There is no dispute that the site is an appropriate location for the development in terms of housing policy."

"There is no substantive evidence that any trees lost could not be adequately replaced as part of a landscaping scheme associated with any development."

The Inspector also raised no objections to the proposed access drive or to the impact on neighbouring properties.

The only reason why the appeal was dismissed was the lack of evidence to counter the suggestion that the proposal would dilute some historical association between Standlake Manor and the surrounding countryside. A thorough Heritage Statement has now been prepared by a reputable local heritage consultant to address this issue. It refutes the previous suggestion of a historical link between the Manor and the surrounding countryside which, it says, "*...was flawed as it appears to have relied on a fake perception of the past*". Therefore, there are no longer any grounds for a heritage objection to the proposed development.

In addition, the design and layout of the current scheme have been amended to improve the impact on the setting of Standlake Manor. The ridge heights of the proposed dwellings have been reduced by 1.3 metres, the house type designs and their layout have been amended, plot 1 has been moved 5 metres further away from Standlake Manor, the double garage at the end of the driveway has been removed completely, additional planting in the form of an 8m to 12m wide woodland belt is now proposed between the proposed dwellings and Standlake Manor, and a 10m wide woodland belt is now proposed along the whole of the south-eastern boundary of the site which will create a defined edge to the village.

Taking the evidence of the appeal decision and the Heritage Statement into account, we hope you will be able to agree your officer's recommendation and support this amended proposal.

[384 words]