

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 18th July 2018
ITEM NO. 15

Ward: Norcot

App No: 180849/OUT

Address: Land Adjacent Thorpe House, Colliers Way, Reading

Proposal: Outline application for residential redevelopment to provide a maximum of 14 dwelling units. Demolition of dwelling at 16 Kirton Close to provide access. (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale reserved for future consideration).

Applicant: Thames Valley Retirement Homes

Date valid: 6 June 2018

Application target decision date: 5 September 2018

26 week date: 5 December 2018

RECOMMENDATION

As per the main agenda.

1. Additional Representations

- 1.1 Two letters of support have been received since the main agenda was finalised. The text of these is attached at Appendix 1 below.
- 1.2 It is considered that the matters raised are adequately addressed in the main report.
- 1.3 For completeness, the letters have been forwarded to the Council's Anti-social Behaviour Team and Thames Valley Police for comment. Both confirm that the area is not a known hot spot for crime or anti-social behaviour.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar

Appendix 1: Additional letters of support received:

1.

To whom this may concern,

I am writing this letter in order to give my account into what it is like to live in front of the current wasteland at the back of Kirton close and at the end of Colliers Way. I have been living at 16 Kirton Close, Reading, West Berkshire RG30 2NS from 1997 to 2013. My mother currently owns the property and I regularly visit. I am 26 years old and I work in the Metropolitan Police Force as a Trainee Detective Constable.

I believe that the redevelopment on the land behind my mother's house would be a positive addition to the community. The location of the proposed development is between Dee Road estate and the roads, which lead directly off Oxford Road, both of these areas, are notorious crime hotspots. Firstly, I would like to discuss the current crime rates and the anti-social behaviour in the area. Secondly, I will portray the safety of the alleyway at the back of 16 Kirton Close along the alleyway leading from Water road/Colliers way to Waverly Road. Finally, environmental issues will be explored focusing on what the land is currently being used for.

(Crime rates is the area behind our house). Throughout my childhood, we would constantly have bicycles tools and anything of value stolen from our back garden. We never reported this to the police, due to the realisation that the property or suspect will be unlikely to be found or retrieved. A few years ago, in the early hours of the morning I caught a male walking on our kitchen roof until he spotted me and quickly ran off. Living in a house that backs onto a large open space whereby it is used as a cut through from many people every day is very scary at times. Anti-social behaviour is common, drinking and drug use on the wasteland is not unusual. This means that disturbances and noise pollution occurs a lot more regularly than desired.

The alleyway is not safe. There is no lighting at all particularly in the path behind Verney Mews. This leaves people feeling very vulnerable. I would not walk down the alleyway on my own in the dark. There are many blind spots. When I do return to Reading, I avoid using this alleyway at all costs during dusk and dark hours, which completely contradicts the purpose of an alleyway. I would like to see an alleyway, which is safe to use by everyone in society. The development will provide a modern uplift to the area. If the new builds were actually secured with, the CCTV cameras covering the alley this would be a major re vamp which will re assure the local residents. Since the development in Dee Road estate, the crime rate has lowered and the community are happier.

The fire brigade are no strangers to the area during building work being completed to my mother's house, we hired a skip, a few days later we noticed a huge black cloud of smoke in our back garden. Someone had set the tip on fire. Fly tipping and littering occurs often there were constantly mattresses and other various furniture items being dumped and set on fire. This incident actually discoloured the brickwork at the back of our house. Used condoms and dirty needles will not take too long to find. The only rubbish bins down the alleyway are dog poo bins and not for general waste. There have been a few occasions whereby I have seen men use the wooded area as a lavatory, which is disgusting! Our property and neighbours at 15 and 17 have also had numerous amounts of graffiti sprayed on the walls facing the alleyways.

I would advise the council to turn this scary dark unkept dirty alleyway into a passage way which all members of society will be happy to use and walk through freely without having to run through it or constantly looking behind them. The redevelopment with CCTV will improve the community, increase value to the neighbouring houses and modernise our much-loved area. The re development is likely to attract young professionals to the area which will also aid the re generation of the area.

2.

Planning Application Number 180849

I would like to take this opportunity to voice my opinion on the redevelopment at the back of Thorpe House.

I have lived on the ally for the last thirty years and I feel that this area is in desperate need of redevelopment.

This area is a frequent walk through for a lot of unsavoury people who participate in anti sociable behaviour. The area has been used by people who participate in drug taking, drinking and dumping their rubbish.

I feel that there needs to be regeneration in the area as the alley is a very dark and dangerous place especially in the winter. There is not sufficient lighting which makes it a very unsafe place for people walking through the estate and especially young children who use the walk way.

Over the years there have been copious amounts of rubbish dumped on the land and these have been very large house hold good including white goods.

The last planning permission was turned down due to a variety of different reasons which seemed to be incorrect especially parking provisions. The road we live in has ample room and with the development of the flats this will open up the area and provide a better space for all residents.

The close will remain a cul de sac with the erecting of the new apartments. I feel that this will enable a nice area around the alley which will be well lit and be a deterrent for those who wish to use the area for drugs, sex, drinking, dumping rubbish and allowing dogs to defecate on the grass.

In turn this will then give the area a more pleasant outlook and I do not see that the passing of this application will have an adverse effect on the area, I do however feel it will cut down on the amount of crime and the constant helicopters and drain of resources due to the fact that it is a very dark area full of alleys which are frequently used to escape from police. The alley is a notorious escape area due to it being used as a through way to the Dee road and Oxford Road

The building of a new play will enhance the area for the young people and with more people around the area and the additional people living in the apartments this will also make it a safer place for all concerned.

With regards to the Labour officials stating that it will set precedence, I feel that this is absolutely untrue as there is not another piece of land in the area that is privately owned and has the capacity for the same kind of development. I also feel that the only precedence that it will set is that the apartments will bring a new fresh look to the area, which may also encourage neighbours to bring the outside of their properties in line. If we look at the planning permission that has been give to three houses at the end of Kirton Close to adapt their garages, this is unsightly as they are not in line with the other houses and also the planning permission given has not had any stipulation that there needs to be a uniformed outlook maintained which unfortunately makes the houses look unflattering.

I love my house and have lived here for nearly 30 years and I feel that the reason for the refusal of the previous planning application appeared to be politically led rather than what is good for the

area. I feel that the majority of people have been persuaded by the minority who do not live on the back of the alleys and are predominantly oblivious to what happens at the back of them in the dark of the night.

There is also the thought that as Reading do not have any financial resources for regeneration of this area that it would be a good idea for the local people to have a nicer place to live.

The two main houses at the end of Kirton close which is number 16 and 17 have experienced a lot of difficulties over the years with this unused piece of land such as:

Fires leading to the back of the house being burnt

bins being set on fire.

Constant graffiti

Dog poo area for people allowing their dogs to defecate and not pick it up

Consistent rubbish being put on the land.

Numerous items thrown over the back walls

Drug and sex objects found on the ally

Drug taking and drinking.

Advantages for planning being approved will be a safer place for all residents and regeneration of an area which is in desperate need of it.

I hope you take these matters into consideration as this is a true reflection of the things that happen around the land which has been an open space for far too long. I feel that if this application is not given the go ahead the area will become a criminal hotspot for all kinds of anti sociable behaviour and I feel this will escalate further.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar