

Minutes of a site meeting held on **Tuesday, 6 December 2016 at 2.00pm.**
at Garage Block adjacent 38/44 Clerks Piece, Beccles.

Members Present:

Councillors P Ashdown (Chairman), S Allen, G Elliott, J Groom and C Rivett.

Apologies:

Councillors N Brooks, A Cackett, J Ceresa, I Graham and M Pitchers.

Officers Present:

K Barrett (Service Manager – Housing), C Green (Area Planning and Enforcement Officer) and S Carter (Democratic Services Officer).

Others in Attendance:

Councillor G Catchpole, Ward Member
Mr M Dixon, Agent for Orwell Housing Association
Mr P Pitchers, Wellington Construction
Ms C Craig, Tenants' Representative and other residents

The Chairman welcomed Members to the site meeting and reminded those present that the purpose of the meeting was a 'fact finding' exercise only and to provide Members with an opportunity to view the site and its surroundings.

No decision would be made before the application was re-considered at the meeting of the Planning Committee on 13 December 2016.

The Area Planning and Enforcement Officer explained the application was for the demolition of three garage blocks and would be replaced with 11 car parking bays and the construction of two two-bedroomed semi-detached bungalows, associated works and five off street parking spaces. He referred to the images which were handed round at the site visit and which would be displayed at the Committee meeting. The existing letting arrangements for the garages was relevant to the matter and both the details of who was renting the garages, where they lived and voids would be reported at the Committee meeting.

Members viewed the site from both the edge of the plot and from the interior, viewing the condition of the garages and the existing parking, the rear of the site and the adjoining alleyway. Members then viewed the precise location of the communal area and proceeded along the access road to view the limited parking available to those bungalows at the northern end of Clerks Piece beyond the bollards, which prevented vehicle access to that part of the overall estate. The second area of garages to the western side was also viewed. Elevation and layout plans were displayed.

Questions

Members and residents raised questions on the following issues:

- The condition of the garages.
- Parking.
- Loss of privacy.

- Proposed location of the new properties.
- Design of the properties.
- Residents' storage sheds.
- Limited parking on the narrow road.
- Provision of parking permits.

The Area Planning and Enforcement Officer considered that the demolition of the garages would allow a more flexible parking arrangement. In addition, consideration had been given to the state of the garages and their small size which did not allow car doors to be easily opened when parked inside. The garages were pre-cast concrete with spalling concrete over rusting reinforcement which could not be repaired and it was expected to find asbestos in the roofs. It was noted that the existing parking would no longer be available but the proposal did include the provision of five new wider disabled parking spaces.

Mr Dixon confirmed that if the bungalows were situated to the back of the overall plot the development would reduce the scope for car parking provision. The proposed layout allowed a more economic and efficient use of the space available. A survey of the garages had shown that seven were used by local residents, seven were rented by people who did not live in Clerks Piece and 10 were currently void. The provision of any parking permits would be the responsibility of the Housing Department. Mr Pitchers confirmed that the width of access was around 4.5m and the development area would be completely resurfaced, with the new parking bays being marked out.

It was noted that full details of the net difference with regard to car parking were contained in the Committee report. Mr Dixon believed that, in total, there were 52 garages in Clerks Piece, 17 used by people living on the estate, 17 used by people who lived elsewhere and 18 void.

In response to a resident's concern that the proposal would result in No. 44 being overlooked, Mr Pitchers confirmed that every effort would be made to retain the ivy growing attached to the garage at the rear of the communal space; however, that not being possible, appropriate fence screening with soft planting would be put in place.

Councillor Catchpole reiterated the narrowness of the road and that it was a struggle for residents, let alone family and visitors, to be able to park. Due to lack of alternative space, some garages were used for storage for, for example, garden tools and furniture.

The Service Manager (Housing) explained that if parking permits were issued to residents, there would be no form of policing to monitor the parking situation. It might be possible to provide a hatched area for emergency vehicles. At the present time, the second area of garages would be retained, however, if demolished the area would likely be retained for parking. The Area Planning and Enforcement Officer advised that planning permission would not be required for the demolition of the garages.

The Service Manager (Housing) explained that the dwellings were not specified for the over 55s and if residents had mobility issues and buggies, they were entitled to apply for a grant from the welfare budget to enable a storage shed to be erected. Although it was appreciated that gardens and existing sheds were small, such mobility scooters were already being used, stored and charged.

The Area Planning and Enforcement Officer explained the reasons for the existing flat roof design not being repeated and the properties would not have a conventional pitched roof design. Mr Pitchers explained that the parapet shown on the elevations would enable a mono pitch, contemporary design and that with the right choice of materials, it would result in a visually aesthetic development.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The site visit concluded at 2.37pm.