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Application for the proposed Erection of a detached 1½-Storey Infill Dwelling plus separate double car port on established residential curtilage land alongside 'Red House', at Stoke Row Road, Kingwood Common, near Henley on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 5NB

Planning Support Statement

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CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|------------------|----|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 2 | SITE APPRAISAL | 2 |
| 3 | PLANNING HISTORY | 5 |
| 4 | PLANNING POLICY | 7 |
| 5 | CONCLUSIONS | 13 |

PLANS:

Appendix 1: 1:1250 scale @A3 – Site Location Plan – 100-01B

Appendix 2: 1:500 scale @A3 – Site Block Plan – 200-01A

Appendix 3: 1:100 scale @A3 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan – J407/100

Appendix 4: 1:100 scale @A3 – Proposed First Floor Plan – J407/101

Appendix 5: 1:100 scale @A3 – Proposed Roof Plan – J407/102

Appendix 6: 1:100 scale @A3 – Proposed SW Front & NW Side Elevations – J407/103

Appendix 7: 1:100 scale @A3 – Proposed NE Rear & SE Side Elevations – J407/104

Appendix 8: 1:100 scale @A3 – Proposed SW Front Elevation in Context – J407/105

Appendix 9: 1:100 scale @A3 – Proposed Car Port Plans – J407/106

Appendix 10: Images of the Application Site & Surroundings

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Support Statement accompanies a planning application to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC, the Local Planning Authority) for the proposed erection of a detached 1½-storey infill dwelling and separate double car port on vacant garden land alongside 'Red House', at Kingwood Common.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Planning Support Statement is to provide a comprehensive record of the history of the properties development and provide supporting evidence to demonstrate that the development proposal would both accord with all relevant Development Plan and any other material planning policy guidance whilst also preserving the residential character and sylvan appearance of the surrounding Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the residential amenities of existing and proposed occupiers at Kingwood Common.
- 1.3 The aim of this statement is to ensure that decision-making is clearly documented in relation to the site-specific history and all material planning policy guidance.
- 1.4 The Development Plan relevant to this application comprises the South Oxfordshire Local Development Plan Core Strategy (2012) and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011).

2 SITE APPRAISAL

Site Location

- 2.1 The entire residential curtilage of 'Red House' covers a total area of 0.295 hectares (0.729 acres), although this residential infill plot application relates to just forty percent of the site (the south eastern portion, which measures 0.119ha (0.294ac). The application site comprises the flat lawned garden area between 'Red House' and its detached annexe to the northwest and the neighbouring property of 'Lovell Cottage', to the southeast. The whole site is broadly rectangular in shape and measures 46.3m wide at the frontage, widening slightly to 53.9m at the rear and has a depth varying between 56.4m, along its northern side boundary and 65.9m along its southern side boundary with 'Lovell Cottage'. The application site for this proposed infill dwelling measures approximately 13.1m wide at the front, quickly widening to 17.2m and ultimately widening to 22.4m at the rear. It has a depth of between 61.8m-65.9m.
- 2.2 The site can be accessed from one of three shared private gravelled driveways (one called Gypsy Lane and the others unnamed) that all head north-easterly off the Stoke Row Road, which runs north-south between Stoke Row and Kingwood Common villages. 'Red House' and the neighbouring property to the rear (northeast) called 'Newlands' define the northernmost extent of Kingwood Common, which is a village of predominantly large detached dwelling houses set within a sylvan landscaped setting. The substantial mature trees and hedgerows that surround all the individual plots ensure that very little of this part of Kingwood Common village is actually visible from outside the settlement in the surrounding rural landscape and also ensures that privacy is maintained between each of the dwellings.
- 2.3 The site is shown on the Site Location and Block Plan drawings – Nos.100-01B and 200-01A, which are attached at Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.4 The whole site and all the surrounding land lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which covers a large part of South Oxfordshire District.

Character and Built Form

- 2.5 Red House is an attractive two-storey detached dwelling house that was probably originally built in the 1930's but has been much extended over the course of the past decade. It is constructed of red brick, with plain white painted timber casement windows and with natural grey slates on the roof. It occupies a flat and rectangular curtilage extending to 0.295ha and is located at the north-western edge of Kingwood Common village. The main house is located in the extreme north-western corner of the plot, with a large detached two-storey garage block, with granny annexe above occupying a more central position within the plot. The garages and annexe are constructed with dark brown stained timber weatherboard clad walls and natural grey slates on the roof. The annexe has white timber gable end windows on its northern and southern sides and matching windows in gabled projections to front and rear.
- 2.6 The site is accessed from a broad gravelled driveway that enters the plot from a pair of electronic metal gates in the south-western corner and then swings north towards the main house before turning east towards the garages and annexe.
- 2.7 Substantial, 2-2.4m high mature hedgerows define the south-western frontage, north-western side and north-eastern rear boundaries, with a 2m high close boarded timber fence defining the south-eastern side boundary with neighbouring 'Lovell Cottage'. A 2.2m high hedgerow runs southwest – northeast through the centre of the plot, alongside the garages and annexe, which effectively sub-divides the plot in two and creates two separate residential garden curtilages, each comprising a flat manicured grass lawn, with a substantial gravelled driveway to the front.
- 2.8 The site and its immediate surroundings are shown on the attached photographic images (see Appendix 10). The plans and images show quite clearly that the 'Red House' plot occupies part of the established built form of Kingwood Common village, which is predominantly characterised by large detached dwelling houses set within spacious landscaped grounds. Having been massively extended over the course of the past ten or so years, 'Red House' comprises a substantial 5-bedroom dwelling, with a separate double garage block containing a 1-bed annexe above and has additional driveway parking for up to four or five additional cars, with vehicle turning areas. The properties size and its design appearance is typical of many of the other large properties in Kingwood Common.

- 2.9 The application site lies within the established residential garden curtilage of 'Red House' and shares the same broad private driveway, but the site is physically separated from 'Red House' and its annexe to the north by the substantial mature hedgerow which runs centrally through the garden. Its privacy to neighbouring properties is maintained by the substantial mature hedgerows to front and back and by the 2.0m high timber fence than runs along the common boundary with 'Lovell Cottage'.
- 2.10 Three first floor bedroom windows on the northern side elevation of 'Lovell Cottage' face north over the boundary fence towards the application site and afford views out over the north-eastern rear half of the site. Those windows are positioned approximately 5-9m back from the intervening boundary fence that they face over and beyond.

Access and movement to the site

- 2.11 Access to this site is from one of three private gravel lanes that extend eastward off the Stoke Row Road, which runs between Stoke Row to the north and Peppard Common to the south. One of the three gravelled lanes lies immediately west of 'Red House' and provides a direct 60m length of highway connecting with Stoke Row Road. Another is a 120m length of highway that runs south from 'Red House towards Stoke Row Road and is shared by neighbouring 'Lovell Cottage' and 'Firlands'. The third and final highway access is a far longer gravelled road, known as Gypsy Lane, which serves many of the houses in Kingwood Common and which runs around the eastern and northern sides of the 'Red House' curtilage.
- 2.12 Stoke Row Road affords quick and easy access to nearby Reading to the south, Oxford and Wallingford to the northwest and Henley to the northeast.
- 2.13 As demonstrated on the Block Plan drawing 200-01A attached at Appendix 2, there is ample space on the driveway for the parking of at least four or five cars, plus two more in the garage block.
- 2.14 Ample space also exists within the infill plot application site for the creation of at least two more parking spaces and a turning area on the extended driveway, plus two additional spaces in the proposed open-fronted car port.

3 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The Red House site at Kingwood Common has an extensive planning history over the course of the last twelve years. Planning permission was granted in December 2001 (SODC Application Ref: **P01/S0914**) for a 2-storey rear extension, with porch and veranda, which would have extended the property by more than 55% in volume. In November 2002 (Ref: **P02/S0649**) planning permission was granted for a varied design of extension from the 2001 approval, which deleted the porch but added a new conservatory and a detached double garage. The revised design effectively increased the size of the original dwelling by more than 75%. In June 2005, (Ref: **P05/E0393**) approval was given for new bay windows and a re-roofing of the extended house.
- 3.2 In February 2006, outline permission was refused for the erection of a detached infill dwelling on what is now the current application site (Ref: **P05/E1297/O**). At that time, the development was perceived to be contrary to policies G1 and H1 in the adopted Oxfordshire County Structure Plan and to policies G2, G4, C1, C2 and H6 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan, plus national Governmental planning advice set out in PPG1 and PPG3. At the time, Kingwood Common was not deemed by the Local Planning Authority to constitute a sustainable settlement suitable for new infill development and the proposal was therefore considered potentially detrimental to the Chilterns AONB. That refusal was not subsequently challenged at any appeal.
- 3.3 In March 2007, retrospective planning permission was granted (Ref: **P06/E1117/RET**) for alterations to the garage block that had created a separate annexe above the garages and for the retention of new driveway entrance gates. The consent was subject to a S.106 Planning Obligation Agreement, which stipulated that the annexe should remain as an ancillary element to 'Red House' and not be turned into an independent dwelling. In February 2011, (Ref: P10/E1928) planning permission was granted for a further first floor rear extension, a ground floor side extension and a new porch entrance on the front of the house. That consent was subsequently modified later that year (Ref: **P11/E1119**) to enable a slightly larger 2-storey rear extension to be constructed.

- 3.4 The consequence of implementing these previous consents is that the resultant 'Red House' is now virtually twice the size of the original dwelling on the plot, and its frontage aspect has been turned through ninety degrees, such that it now faces south-easterly, rather than southwest and its garden now lies predominantly to the side rather than to the rear of the house.
- 3.5 It is relevant to note that consent was recently granted about half a mile to the south of the application site, at No.35 Stoke Row Road, in Peppard Common, for a similar detached 2-storey dwelling house on a similar sized infill plot (Refs: P12/S0675/FUL and P12/S3049/FUL). It is our contention that there is no substantive difference in planning policy terms between the development merits of those recent approvals and this new infill development proposal and we would therefore hope for consistency in the manner in which those and this development proposal are determined by SODC.

4 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Abandonment of Former Relevant Planning Policy Guidance

- 4.1 During the past seven-and-a-half years since the previous residential infill application was refused planning permission by SODC on this plot (Ref: **P05/E1297/O**) there have been substantial changes to national and local planning policy, which have had a significant impact upon the consideration of the planning merits of accommodating a new house on this plot. Nationally, Planning Policy Guidance Notes Nos.1 & 3 (PPG1 – General Principles; and PPG3 – Housing) have been revoked and new Governmental guidance is now contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, March 2012). Also, at the time of the previous refusal, the development was perceived to be contrary to policies G1 and H1 in the former Oxfordshire County Structure Plan. However, that Plan has subsequently been abandoned and its former policies have been revoked and therefore have no weight. The previous refusal also made mention to perceived conflict with policies G2, G4, C1, C2 and H6 in the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan. Once more, all of those policies have either been revoked or they have been subsequently modified by new policies contained within the recently adopted (December 2012) Core Strategy for South Oxfordshire.

New Relevant National & Development Plan Policy Guidance

- 4.2 National planning policy guidance is now given in the NPPF. It maintains, at paragraphs 11 and 15, the presumption in favour of sustainable development specified in planning law at S.38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and S.70(2) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 which state “***that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise***”. Amongst twelve core principles that have been set down to underpin all decision taking on planning applications, which are listed at paragraph 17 of the Framework guidance, are requirements to “***always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings...recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and support thriving rural communities within it...[and] encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed, provided that it is***

not of high environmental value...” Paragraph 53 of the Framework guidance states that “*LPAs should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.*” However, in the South Oxfordshire development plan policies there is nothing specific that precludes garden land developments and Local Plan policy H4 and Core Strategy policy CSR1 specifically encourage such developments at named ‘Appendix 4’ settlements, such as Kingwood Common. It is also worth noting that infill development on this particular piece of garden land would not cause any harm to the local area as it is totally enclosed by substantive boundary features and neighbouring dwellings.

- 4.3 Paragraph 55 to the NPPF promotes sustainable rural housing developments where it would help to “*...enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities...*” Paragraph 58 to the NPPF advises that “*planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:...add to the overall quality of the area...establish a strong sense of place...optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development...respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials...and are visually attractive as a result of good architectural and appropriate landscaping*”. Finally, also of relevance to the application proposal is the NPPF guidance given at paragraph 109, which states that “*the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...minimising impacts on biodiversity...*”
- 4.4 There is nothing specific within the NPPF guidance that this proposed one-house infill development would be contrary to in any way. The site lies within an established rural settlement that is deemed appropriate for small scale infill developments in the adopted Development Plan. The site is well screened from the surrounding AONB land and development would not cause landscape detriment, it would help to sustain rural vitality, would add to the general design quality of the settlement, would maintain a strong sense of place, optimise the site’s use, respond to local character and not cause heritage or biodiversity detriment.
- 4.5 New Development Plan guidance for South Oxfordshire is now contained within the remaining saved Local Plan policies in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011) and in the new Core Strategy policies for South Oxfordshire (2012).

- 4.6 Local Plan policy **H4** states inter alia that “*proposals for housing on sites...within the built-up areas of the villages will be permitted provided that: an important open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost...*” This guidance is supplemented by Core Strategy policy **CSR1**, which permits developments of up to 1 or 2 houses as infill development on sites no greater than 0.2ha within “...*smaller villages*” identified at Appendix 4 of the Settlement Strategy, including **Kingwood Common**.
- 4.7 If a rural infill development proposal accords generally in principle with Local Plan policy **H4** and Core Strategy policy **CSR1**, as this development would do, then provided it would not materially and detrimentally affect: its surrounding landscape quality (retained Local Plan policy **C2** and Core Strategy policy **CSEN1**); Local Plan housing policy **H13**, which requires the scale and design of all developments to be in keeping with the character of their site and surroundings; the biodiversity quality of a site is not harmed (Core Strategy policy **CSB1**); and the proposed design would be generally sustainable and accord with the Council’s general design guidance (Core Strategy policies **CSQ2** and **CSQ3**, respectively) plus supplementary design guidance given within the South Oxfordshire Design Guide (2008) then permission should not reasonably be withheld.
- 4.8 Local Plan policy **C2** and Core Strategy policy **CSEN1** seek to ensure that development within the Chilterns AONB is of a scale and type appropriate to the area and is sympathetic to its setting in terms of its proposed siting, design and material finish. The proposed infill dwelling would be entirely contained within the existing built-up limits of Kingwood Common, which is a ‘small village’ within the AONB generally regarded by Local Plan policy **H4** and Core Strategy policy **CSR1** as a village location suitable for limited infill developments of up to 1 or 2 houses on plots no more than 0.2ha in size. The erection of a single 1½-storey detached dwelling house and car port on a 0.119ha garden plot on a site surrounded by similar such developments would therefore be of a scale and type appropriate to its area.
- 4.9 There is ample space within the plot to accommodate a dwelling whose siting would lie naturally between the neighbouring houses and annexe on either side and would be set back from the roadways to both front and back a distance that would be typical of many of the existing neighbouring properties.

- 4.10 By incorporating red brick, painted render and natural cedar wood cladding on the walls and natural grey slates on the roof, plus white painted timber casement windows, the proposed design and material finish would be sympathetic and typical to its immediate environment. The retention of existing tree and hedgerow landscape features and the supplementing of those features by additional selective tree planting would ensure the preservation of the landscape character and setting of the locality and surrounding AONB. Accordingly, therefore, the proposed infill development would not only accord generally in principle with Local Plan policy H4 and Core Strategy policy CSR1 but would also protect and preserve the landscape character and setting of the site and its surroundings and therefore accord with saved Local Plan policy C2 and corresponding supplemental Core Strategy policy CSEN1.
- 4.11 The flat manicured garden lawn that comprises this application site surrounded by its tall but narrow and regularly maintained garden hedgerows contains nothing of ecological value. Accordingly, therefore, a small-scale development involving the erection of one new private dwelling house within the centre of the lawned curtilage would not cause loss of biodiversity and would accord with Core Strategy policy CSB1. Potentially, local biodiversity could be improved through the erection of new bird boxes and bat boxes in the existing and proposed trees on the plot, which the applicant would be willing to incorporate.
- 4.12 In terms of general design matters, as referred to in Core Strategy policies CSQ2 and CSQ3, the proposed new dwelling on this infill plot would be constructed in compliance with Code Level 4 to the Code for Sustainable Homes and as such would be compliant with Core Strategy policy CSQ2. The application site contains no features of known historic or heritage value and there is ample space within the 0.119ha site to both accommodate the proposed new dwelling and car port and maintain approximate 30m and 25m garden depths to both front and rear, whilst also maintaining at least 4m and up to 15m separation distances with the existing developments alongside. Existing trees and hedgerows would be retained and supplemented, it would help utilise the site far more efficiently and create a sense of place on what is otherwise a much underused and divorced area of residential garden curtilage. It would also integrate seamlessly with the existing pattern of development and the maintained accesses all around.

- 4.13 Although the proposed new dwelling would itself accord with all general design policy guidance, a further issue to consider in this instance is the overlooking that could potentially occur from windows in the existing 'Red House', its annexe and from the neighbouring property 'Lovell Cottage'.
- 4.14 There are three first floor bedroom and bathroom windows in the south-eastern frontage elevation of 'Red House' that face towards the application site, plus one more bedroom window in the south-eastern gable end wall of its annexe, above the garages. There are also three more first floor level bedroom windows in the north-western side elevation of 'Lovell Cottage'. The three first floor bedroom windows in 'Red House' that face forward towards the front portion of the application site are located 9m away from the existing hedgerow that defines the northern side boundary of the application site and across a gravelled forecourt driveway. That distance, coupled with additional tree planting alongside the existing established hedgerow and the siting of the proposed car ports would prevent overlooking of the application site from 'Red House'. Over such a considerable distance, there would be no detriment caused to the residential amenities of occupants of 'Red House' or from 'Red House' to the future occupants of the proposed dwelling. A single bedroom window in the southern gable end of the 'Red House' annexe would only be 1m from the common boundary hedge between it and the proposed new dwelling on the application site. However, there are three other windows in the western, eastern and northern elevations of that small annexe accommodation block, so new tree screen planting placed 3m-5m away from that window to prevent direct overlooking of the front garden area of the proposed new dwelling should not cause any significant detriment to amenities, particularly as it would not affect a principal window. The three side bedroom windows in 'Lovell Cottage' would face the prospect of new tree planting erected some 10m-16m to the north. Such planting would prevent direct overlooking into the rear garden area of the proposed new dwelling but would be sufficiently far away and to the north of the bedroom windows of Lovell Cottage not to cause detriment by loss of light. Even though views are not statutorily protected, the owners of 'Red House' could have legitimately planted a tall tree screen right along their boundary at any time and without any control. However, by virtue of the fact that the few proposed new trees would be planted so far away, light and amenities to occupants of 'Lovell Cottage' would be satisfactorily maintained.

- 4.15 Accordingly, therefore, the proposed residential infill development of a single dwelling plus associated car ports on this plot would accord with all material design guidance published by the Council.
- 4.16 As has been previously mentioned at paragraph 3.5 above, planning permission was granted last year for a similar residential infill development proposal in the garden land alongside No.35 Stoke Row Road. In the light of that most recent development within the Parish (less than half a mile from the application site) we trust that the LPA will be consistent in their determination and grant planning permission for this new application.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 As has been demonstrated in the preceding sections of this Statement, the national and local planning policy background against which a previous residential infill development was refused on this plot has changed significantly. The reasons for refusal stipulated at that time are now no longer pertinent to any new consideration.
- 5.2 National planning policy guidance in PPG1 and PPG3 is no longer relevant. Similarly, Oxfordshire County Structure Plan policy has also now been revoked and is no longer relevant and all the original South Oxfordshire Local Plan policies that were referred to in the last refusal (G2, G4, C1, C2 and H6) have either been revoked entirely or have been substantially amended.
- 5.3 Revised Local Plan policy H4 and new Core Strategy policy CSR1, plus its accompanying list of towns and villages named at Appendix 4 of the settlement strategy specifically allow developments in principle such as that currently proposed on this application site. The accompanying plans and support documents with this application demonstrate that the proposals would accord with all other material planning policy guidance such as that contained within the NPPF and Local Plan policy C2 plus new Core Strategy policies CSEN1, CSB1, CSQ2 and CSQ3.
- 5.4 The documents submitted with this planning application provide clear evidence that the proposed new dwelling would be acceptable in accordance with all material national and local Development Plan guidance, would preserve the character and landscape setting of the area and would protect and preserve residential amenities. I therefore respectfully urge South Oxfordshire District Council to grant planning permission for this residential infill development proposal at 'Red House', Kingwood Common.

APPENDIX 1 – LOCATION PLAN – 100-01B

APPENDIX 2 – SITE BLOCK PLAN – 200-01A

APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN – J407/100

APPENDIX 4 – PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN – J407/101

APPENDIX 5 – PROPOSED ROOF PLAN – J407/102

APPENDIX 6 – PROPOSED SW FRONT & NW SIDE ELEVATIONS – J407/103

APPENDIX 7 – PROPOSED NE REAR & SE SIDE ELEVATIONS – J407/104

APPENDIX 8 – PROPOSED SW FRONT ELEVATION IN CONTEXT – J407/105

APPENDIX 9 – PROPOSED CAR PORT PLANS – J407/106

APPENDIX 10 – IMAGES OF THE APPLICATION SITE & ITS SURROUNDINGS