

P/14/1252/FP

PERSIMMON HOMES LTD

FAREHAM EAST

AGENT: PERSIMMON HOMES
LTD

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING OFFICE, ERECTION OF OFFICE WITH 7 NO. FLATS ABOVE WITH ASSOCIATED ACCESS, PARKING AND LANDSCAPING AND THE ERECTION OF 6 NO. DWELLINGS FRONTING FURZEHALL AVENUE.

100 WICKHAM ROAD FAREHAM HAMPSHIRE PO16 7HT

Report By

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Amendments

Amended plans were received on:

- 22/04/2015: reduction in size of the office building footprint and changes to the boundary treatments
- 18/09/2015: reduction in number of housing units on frontage from seven to six, omission of second floor to frontage houses and re-configuration of car parking for frontage housing.

Site Description

The application site is an almost triangular parcel of land on the north east side of Wickham Road at its junction with Furzehall Avenue. The site currently accommodates an office building for the applicant, Persimmon Homes. Car parking serving the offices is situated on the northern and eastern sides of the building.

The land falls significantly to the north and off site to the north and north west. The surroundings to the site are predominantly residential to the north, east and west. Immediately to the south is the Parkway office building.

Description of Proposal

The application seeks full planning permission for the redevelopment of the site.

The proposal involves:

- the demolition of the existing office building and removal of the existing car park;
- the provision of a new office building served by its own, barrier controlled car parking.

The office building is simple in its form and material palette with a rendered entrance which sits proud of the main elevation to articulate the entrance, with a louvre screen across the reception windows.

The office car park is split into two areas, one forward of the building and the second to its rear. These office car parking areas are to be barrier controlled and total, together, forty nine parking spaces.

- seven two-bedroom flats at first floor level above the new offices.

The flats will be served from their own access point at the side of the building. Amenity

space for the flats will be provided by way of a roof terrace, some of which is communal and some marked for private use. Each flat is to benefit from allocated parking equating to two spaces each plus two visitor spaces.

-six two storey dwellings fronting onto Furzehall Avenue. These dwellings comprise two 2-bedroom dwellings, two 3-bedroom dwellings and two 4-bedroom dwellings. The three and four bedroom units include driveway parking with access onto Furzehall Avenue with the four bed units also benefitting from a car parking space to the rear. The two bedroom units (the semi-detached pair) benefit from rear parking provision

Policies

The following policies & Guidance apply to this application:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Approved Fareham Borough Core Strategy

CS1 - Employment Provision

CS2 - Housing Provision

CS4 - Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

CS5 - Transport Strategy and Infrastructure

CS6 - The Development Strategy

CS7 - Development in Fareham

CS17 - High Quality Design

CS18 - Provision of Affordable Housing

Approved SPG/SPD

RCCPS - Residential Car and Cycle Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document,

Development Sites and Policies

DPS1 - Sustainable Development

DSP3 - Impact on living conditions

DSP15 - Recreational Disturbance on the Solent Special Protection Areas

DSP17 - Existing Employment Sites and Areas

Representations

In response to publicising the originally submitted scheme, thirty letters of objection were received. The main issues raised therein can be summarized as follows:

Overspill parking from this site and the HCC offices causes parking in adjoining residential roads with poor access for emergency vehicles. Roads are already busy and parking difficult along Wickham Road. The proposed houses would be accessed off a dangerous bend, and visibility available from them would be limited. There is no parking provision for visitors to the houses and garages will be used for storage. Inadequate car parking would be available for the offices based on the submitted floor plans. Future expansion of car parking should be allowed for in the design. The proposals at the site will worsen the highways conditions in the locality.

The proposals represent overdevelopment of the site. The office building will come nearer

to neighbouring dwellings , including a bungalow, and will tower over these neighbours. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the application site is on higher land than neighbouring properties. The hedge on the northern boundary will not prevent overlooking from the first floor office windows. Car parking will be closer to neighbouring properties increasing disturbance from movement and headlight glare. A wall or fence on boundaries would help this.

The office car park will become a playground for the children in the flats above. As there is no play area in the development, it should be a condition of any permission that the existing nearby one is improved. Government advice advocates no social housing on less than 10 units. It is a poor relationship to locate flats above commercial properties with a lack of amenity space and bin storage. A 1.7 metre high parapet wall is not tall enough to safeguard privacy. Residential uses will create more unsocial noise. The existing site is only in use Mon - Fri 0800 - 1800.

The houses fronting Furzehall Avenue will be substantially higher than those in Cornfield and overlook back gardens causing loss of privacy. Three storey houses are out of character, overbearing and overpowering due to their siting. The linear housing layout is unimaginative and should turn the corner to front the office access road. The houses will be very close together. Semi-detached houses will be out of keeping.

A further round of publicity was undertaken following the receipt of amended plans. As a result of this publicity, a further fourteen letters of objection were received. The additional matters raised in those letters are as follows:

Given the many buildings in the vicinity, it would be kinder to the environment to leave a green area in this space with trees planted where those that have been cut down were.

A wall would be much better than a fence to neighbouring gardens. We have requested this of the applicant.

Whilst improved there remains a lack of visitor parking for plots 1-6.

Why is the applicant reluctant to turn the houses through 180 degrees?

The houses could be set back to provide a delivery lay-by.

The parking for the flats has no security barrier so will be abused and used by office staff.

The conversion of Furze Hall to flats meets that need making the need for these flats redundant.

Overlooking will still arise from the re-sited office building.

Parking has almost doubled along boundary with immediate neighbour. A barrier type solution must be found and agreed.

This should be a low scale office with suitable parking not a hybrid with housing too

If approved the construction vehicles and contractor parking will need suitable management

Consultations

Director of Planning and Regulation (Highways): No objection subject to conditions

Director of Planning and Regulation (Ecology): No objection subject to conditions

Director of Planning and Regulation (Arborist): No objection

Director of Planning and Regulation (Environmental Health - Contamination): No objection subject to condition

Director of Operations (Recycling & Refuse): The scheme must have regard to the requirements for the storage and collection of waste

Environment Agency: No bespoke comments to make

Hampshire Constabulary (Crime Prevention Design Advisor): Comments:

- Some suggestions are made to increase security for the occupants such as door and rooflight specification;
- The cycle store building is isolated from the apartments so needs to be secure as this is vulnerable to crime. Ideally it should be within the flat building;
- Rear boundaries should be secured with a key lock on gates.

Planning Considerations - Key Issues

The key planning considerations in the determination of this application are:

- The principle of development
- Character of the area
- Living conditions
- Highways and parking
- Affordable housing
- Other matters

THE PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The application site is, for the purposes of planning policy, within the defined urban settlement boundary. The site is identified in the Development Sites and Policies Plan as an "Employment Site" against which policy DSP17 applies. This policy seeks to protect identified sites for economic development purposes rather than allow the loss of land to other uses. The policy sets out that the redevelopment of these existing areas that result in the loss of floor space for economic development purposes will not be permitted unless:

- 1) All appropriate forms of economic development have been considered;
- 2) It can clearly be demonstrated that the land or building is not fit for purpose and modernisation or redevelopment would be financially unviable; and
- 3) The proposal is accompanied by marketing details.

In this case criteria 1) and 3) are not considered necessary. The proposal does result in a reduction in the floor space for B1 use however the redevelopment proposal provides for a replacement office building such that there is no actual change in the economic development use. The proposal instead seeks to integrate this B1 use with a residential

use. Given that the B1 use remains there is no need to consider the other appropriate forms of economic development (criterion 1)). As the site is being redeveloped with a new B1 office for the same user, there is no requirement for the site to be marketed and details of that marketing exercise submitted (criterion 3).

The existing office building dates from the mid eighties. It is of irregular shape and spread over three stories. The internal space is poorly laid out with a large central atrium with ornamental fishpond and staircase which is not considered to be an efficient use of the office space. There are poorly laid out rooms with no natural light or ventilation and parts of the building are poorly constructed with substandard insulation meaning the building is cold in the winter and hot in the summer. The applicant submits therefore that the actual area of the office that is usable is not dissimilar to the office building proposed.

The application submits that the existing building can accommodate 66 employees and that the proposed building is designed to accommodate the same number of staff. Currently the applicant advises that there are 56 people employed at the site in the existing building.

Whilst the proposed office building may be smaller than the existing, the internal arrangements are much better in their design so that the building makes far more efficient use of space; the poor internal layout of the existing building means that some parts of it are very limited in the way they can be used. Officers consider that the principle of the replacement office building is therefore considered to be acceptable.

As well as the replacement office building the application proposes the provision of thirteen dwellings. Seven will be two bedroom flats located on the first floor above the new office and six are proposed long the north western site boundary fronting Furzehall Avenue.

The policies in the Core Strategy and the Development Sites and Policies Plan (Local Plan Part 2) seek to focus new development on areas within the Defined Urban Settlement Boundaries.

Some third party comments have suggested that with the progress of the Welborne Plan (Local Plan Part 3) that there is no need for any additional housing development such as this proposal. Subject to compliance with national and local plan policies, new housing in sustainable urban locations cannot be resisted as a matter of principle.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

The predominant character of the surroundings is that of a residential area.

The proposed new office building is, in part, on the footprint of the existing building, but in any event is proposed as a two storey building, simple in its form and design. Its impact upon the character of the area is not considered to be harmful particularly given the presence of the existing, three storey building much closer to the street frontage.

The frontage to Furzehall Avenue is currently very open and laid to lawn and areas of parking.

The immediate character on arrival into Furzehall Avenue is that of the application site and the wide verge and boundary treatments to the dwellings in Swallow Wood. The dwellings in Swallow Wood do not face onto Furzehall Avenue. It is not until after passing the application site, when Furzehall Avenue turns to the east, that the dwellings address the

road and front the street with front gardens and driveways.

The application seeks in part to provide a frontage development to Furzehall Avenue rather than turning its back on the road and be inward facing.

The scheme has been amended by omitting the second floors, reducing the number of dwellings by one and reducing the size of the semi-detached pair. These amendments result in a more pleasing street scene with space between dwellings.

The application has also reduced the extent of frontage hard surfacing, whilst ensuring appropriate space for parking. This helps to break up the dominance of the frontage by hard surfacing and car parking.

The architecture reflects the vernacular of the area with a strong gabled roofscape broken up by chimney details. The material palette is simple with a facing brick, plain concrete tile and some cream render to reflect the materials elsewhere in the vicinity.

Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy requires development to respond positively to and be respectful of an area in terms of size, scale and spaciousness. The proposed six dwellings along Furzehall Avenue achieve this aim.

Officers consider that the proposal is respectful of the character of the area and is considered to be acceptable.

LIVING CONDITIONS:

There are two issues to be addressed with regard to living conditions. The first of these is the living conditions provided for the occupants of the proposed development; and secondly the living conditions of the occupiers of existing neighbouring properties.

The roof terrace for the proposed first floor apartments provides an amenity area of 21 square metres per unit. The emerging Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out that roof terraces can be an acceptable alternative to gardens and that they are an innovative ways of providing quality outdoor space.

The proposed gardens for the six frontage dwellings each provide for a range of garden depths of 11 metres (plot 6) up to 13.5 metres (plot 1), which are in accordance with the emerging Design Guidance SPD and this Council's long held expectation.

Officers acknowledge that the office building (with flats above) being sited deeper into the site brings the two storey built form closer to neighbouring dwellings.

Number 26 Furzehall Avenue is located to the east of the site and sited on lower ground to the application site. The new office/ flatted building at its closest point measures in excess of 26 metres to the boundary of this property. In light of the distance and the physical relationship between the two buildings, this relationship is considered acceptable.

The rearrangement of the car parking area at the rear (east) of the site will result in the movement of cars closer to the garden boundary of this property. The application proposes the erection of a 1.8 metre high close board fence along this boundary to provide a more robust boundary and to mitigate against any headlight glare associated with the use of the car park.

To the north east of the site is number 28. This is a bungalow that faces south towards the application site. The boundary with number 28 is also to be provided with a 1.8 metre high close board fence due to the relationship of the car park with a bedroom and lounge window.

The building itself is offset approximately 10 metres from the boundary with number 28 although along the boundary is the garage to number 28. The immediate private amenity space for number 28 is its garden to the north which is sheltered by the dwelling itself. The proposed bulk of the building is not considered to be overbearing and detrimental to the living conditions of number 28.

The rear elevation of number 6 Furzehall Avenue is in excess of 27 metres from the northern elevation of the office/ flatted building which is considered to be acceptable in terms of both outlook and privacy.

The car parking arrangement results in an increase in parking spaces, from two at present to four, adjacent the rear boundary of number 6. The occupier of number 6 has expressed concern that the retained hedge is inadequate at protecting the amenity of the garden from additional vehicle movements.

It is appropriate to consider the existing car parking layout which includes parking areas adjacent to this neighbouring garden already. The boundary hedge between the parking area and the neighbouring garden is to be protected during construction and retained post development. The car parking proposed in this location is not considered to cause material harm to the living conditions of the neighbour.

The proposed roof terrace above the office building, serving the proposed flats, is to be enclosed by a 1.7 metre high parapet wall. This will ensure that any views from the roof terrace are directed upwards and not down towards neighbouring gardens.

Third party comments raise concerns that 1.7 metres is not high enough. Given this height of enclosing wall to the roof terrace and the separation distances the proposal is not considered to result in overlooking to neighbours or appear as an overbearing feature to neighbouring gardens.

Along the frontage of Furzehall Avenue Plots 4-6 face the side boundary and blank flank elevation of number 1 Swallow Wood. Number 7 Swallow Wood is a similar distance from the proposed plots 1 and 2. There is approximately 19m from the front elevation of the proposed dwellings to the side boundaries of the dwellings opposite. The verge in between the two also includes semi mature deciduous trees which will help mitigate any first floor views from the proposed dwellings towards the neighbouring gardens and number 7 is enclosed by a coniferous hedge with garden trees similar in size to those outside of number 1.

The omission of the second floor reduces the potential for overlooking to the neighbours and when coupled with the separation distances and highway verge tree planting the proposal is not considered to result in material harm to the privacy of the occupiers of these dwellings.

CAR PARKING:

It is clear from the representations that the local roads are under pressure from on-street

parking as a consequence of inadequate parking at the employment site to the south of the application site, the Parkway Office complex. Neighbours indicate that the occupants of this office use the surrounding roads and the Wickham Road to park, which in turn causes obstructions on the highway.

The applicant is sensitive to this local pressure on the highway network and is keen to ensure that the development proposals do not exacerbate this situation.

The office proposal will be serviced by forty nine parking spaces. The emerging non-residential parking standards for the Borough require a parking standard of one space per thirty square metres of floor area. With a floor area of 803 square metres this equates to a parking requirement of twenty seven spaces. The proposal is therefore overproviding by some twenty two spaces.

The provision of the spaces will be convenient to the office entrance points at the front and rear of the building and will be barrier controlled such that the parking would be attractive to the employees using the office building.

The applicant has also undertaken a survey of their existing car park during a normal working week, and Officers have also undertaken 'spot checks' during the consideration of the planning application. The results of the survey indicate that the highest number of cars parked in the car park was forty three which is still below the number of spaces proposed. It is clear that the car park for the existing site is not always full and the occupancy of the car park remains below the number of parking spaces proposed for the office scheme.

Whilst the off site parking pressures are noted, given that the proposal provides a level of car parking somewhat in excess of this Council's parking standards for a B1 use, Officers do not believe it would be reasonable to require the applicant to take any further steps to address the off site parking issue.

The residential element of the proposal provides parking in accordance with the Residential Parking Standards set out in the 2009 SPD. The flats are each allocated two spaces and there are a further two visitor spaces provided.

The three bedroomed houses on the frontage have driveway parking; the four bedroomed units have driveway parking plus these units have a rear parking space equating to three spaces each. The two bedroomed units have two spaces each to the rear.

The three and four bedroomed homes also have garages included in the design although these are not counted towards the parking provision given the SPD advice. There is no visitor parking on Furzehall Avenue for these dwellings.

Third party comments have suggested that the siting of the houses and the access to the houses would be dangerous on the bend of Furzehall Avenue.

The Furzehall Avenue frontage is currently restricted by double yellow lines and these are to remain. As such the visibility across the site frontage would largely be retained.

Whilst there are no turning facilities on each plot this is reflective of the other dwellings in the vicinity where turning areas are not provided for each and every plot. The siting of the dwellings and the provision of access points onto Furzehall Avenue is considered acceptable in highway terms.

Representations also express concern at the resultant increase in turning traffic onto Wickham Road as a result of the proposal. The application is supported by a Transport Statement (TS). The TS reviews the traffic generation of the existing building with the applicant's traffic and that of the Driving Standards Agency Test Centre which was previously in the building but has recently vacated as a result of the redevelopment proposals.

The TS sets out that the two office uses generated approximately 353 vehicle movements per day. The proposed redevelopment of the office with fourteen dwellings (the TS was written based on the scheme as originally submitted) would equate to 311 average vehicle movements a day according to the TS. This indicates an actual reduction in the daily vehicle movements associated with the site from the proposed development.

The Wickham Road junction is considered acceptable in design terms to safely accommodate the traffic proposed.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND VIABILITY:

This proposal is subject to the requirements of Policy CS18 of the adopted Core Strategy. As the proposal includes thirteen residential units, there is a policy requirement for thirty percent of the units to be available as affordable housing.

Where development viability is an issue, developers are expected to produce a financial assessment in which it is clearly demonstrated the maximum number of affordable dwellings which can be achieved on the site.

For this application, the applicant has submitted a full financial viability assessment on a 'confidential' open book basis; a copy of the viability assessment has been made available to Members to assist in their decision making.

The viability assessment shows that when the construction and other costs of delivering this mixed use scheme are considered against the values the offices and dwellings might achieve, the proposal results in a negative development value. As a consequence the applicant argues through their viability assessment that on the grounds of viability the proposals are not able to deliver any affordable housing.

Officers have sought independent financial advice in relation to the viability assessment. The independent financial advice received states that the assumptions made within the viability assessment are reasonable, and the assessment has been undertaken in a sound manner. The assessment shows that the mixed scheme is not viable, in strictly financial terms, with or without affordable housing. The provision of affordable housing will clearly increase the scale of deficit.

In light of the applicant's viability assessment, which has been independently assessed on behalf of the Council, Officers conclude that delivery of the scheme without any affordable housing provision is acceptable in this specific case.

OTHER MATTERS:

The application is supported with an Arboricultural Impact Appraisal and Method Statement. This sets out that there are a number of trees indicated for removal. The development can be undertaken without harm to any of the retained trees on site which are essentially those

to the eastern end of the site, those in neighbouring gardens and the northern boundary hedge all of which are to be retained by appropriate tree protective fencing and construction exclusion zones within the fenced areas. There are no arboricultural objections to the proposal.

An Extended Phase 1 and Phase 2 habitat survey also support the application proposals. The building is thought to be of low potential for bat roosting opportunities and the car parking area are hard surfacing and short cut grassed areas with limited biodiversity potential. There is no ecological objections to the proposal.

The Borough of Fareham benefits from a stretch of coastline that has been internationally recognised as Special Protection Areas (SPA's). The European Habitats and Birds Directives protect rare species and habitats. The Directives have been transposed into UK law through the Habitats Regulations. Under these Regulations, the borough council must assess whether or not a proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on an SPA.

An assessment is required by the Local Planning Authority to determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. If necessary, avoidance or mitigation measures could be included to remove the harm which otherwise would have occurred. It is also necessary to look at the proposal in combination with other developments in the local area.

Policy CS4 (Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) of the Core Strategy sets out that the habitats of importance to the borough, including SPA's will be protected. The policy also proposes that Fareham Borough Council will work with other authorities in the PUSH area to develop and implement a strategy to protect European Sites from recreational pressure. CS4 sets out that developments likely to have an individual or cumulative adverse impact will not be permitted unless the necessary mitigation measures have been secured.

The applicant has provided the necessary financial contribution towards the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership interim strategy, such that the proposed development is considered to mitigate its impact and would, in combination with other developments, not increase the recreational pressure and habitat disturbance to the Solent Coastal Protection Areas.

Third party comments have referred to the lack of onsite public open space provision and that the development should, in lieu of onsite provision, contribute to the improvement of existing off site open spaces near to the site. Paragraph 30 of the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Open Space indicates that on schemes under 20 units, such as the application site, that there is no need for the provision of on-site open space. Since the adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) the Borough will not now seek financial contributions from development for off site improvements or enhancements because such works would be caught by the CIL regime and are included on the Borough Council's Regulation 123 list.

CONCLUSIONS:

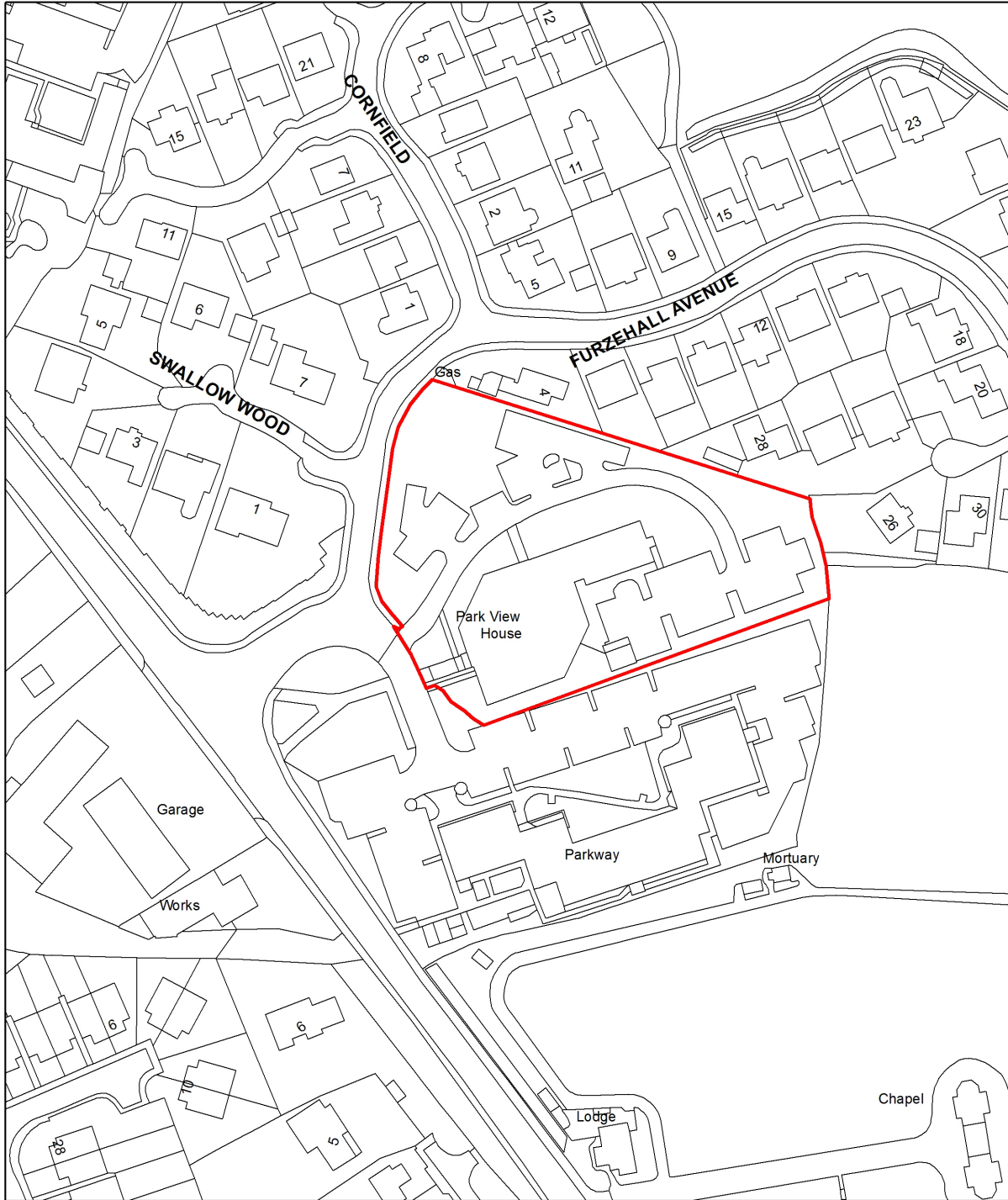
The proposal, as now amended, is considered to be an acceptable form of development that would not cause material harm to the visual amenities of the area, the street scene, highway safety or the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Recommendation

PERMISSION: subject to conditions to be provided in the form of an update before the Planning Committee meeting.

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL



100 Wickham Road
Scale 1:1250

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