



Daniel Washington C2010
Designing Out Crime Officer

Thames Valley Police
Headquarters South
Oxford Road
Kidlington
OX5 2NX

24 October 2024

Reference: 242421

Location: School Road, Arborfield Cross

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for consulting Thames Valley Police in relation to the above planning application. I have reviewed the submitted documents and crime statistics for the area.

The following comments are provided to ensure the application meets the requirements of;

- The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 paragraph 96(b); which states that Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion...
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2023, paragraph 135(f) which states that "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible... and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience".

Having reviewed the submitted information, I do not have any significant concerns with the proposed scheme from a designing out crime perspective at this stage. However, should outline planning permission be approved, I would recommend the following points in relation to the submitted illustrative layout are addressed in the preparation of the any reserved matters submission. Alternatively, the Council may consider it appropriate for the illustrative layout to be revised now to take these points into account:

- **Parking:** Generally, wherever possible, in curtilage parking is preferred. In any case, a parking space must be covered by active surveillance from the dwelling that it serves, providing parked vehicles with a capable and appropriate guardian. Locating parking to the rear boundary of the plot should be avoided, as it restricts the opportunities for surveillance and leaves vehicles vulnerable to crime.

The Illustrative layout shows a few instances of rear parking courtyards, or car parking areas to the rear of properties. These should be minimised, as they can attract crime and antisocial behaviour, and can provide access to vulnerable side and rear boundaries. Where they cannot be avoided, they should have electric gated access, with any visitor spaces provided on street, well lit with column lighting, and

well overlooked.

- **Public Open space** Areas of POS/play should be designed and located to incorporate a high level of natural surveillance from neighbouring dwellings. The occupants of these dwellings could act as capable guardians to play areas, but need to be able to observe the area from active rooms in the dwellings to do so effectively. Clear stem trees (clear to 2m), and hedging maintained below 1m should be used in the planting to facilitate clear sightlines. At present, the location of the play area on the western end of the development has the potential to be screened from view of the surrounding houses by trees.

Areas of green space adjoining the highway must also have sufficient landscaping and/or design features to prevent unauthorised vehicle incursion.

The management and security of the community orchard should also be considered and information provided with the reserved matters.

- **Boundaries with neighbouring uses:** The security of boundaries with existing neighbours of the site needs to be considered and appropriately addressed in the layout and landscaping scheme. Secure, defensible boundaries with natural surveillance should be provided. The site shares a boundary with the adjacent school and the most secure boundary possible should be provided. If a public ecological buffer does not need to be provided in this location, then the most appropriate approach may be to have rear gardens of dwellings sharing the boundary with the school.

In addition, the reserved matters should consider the following matters in the scheme design and an accompanying Designing Out Crime Statement should be prepared to demonstrate that the relevant matters have been considered. Please note this is not an exhaustive list, and further guidance can be found in the Secured By Design Homes Guide 2024:

- **Dwelling Boundaries and Orientation:** Dwellings should have clear boundaries, making clear what is public and private space. Frontages should be open to view, with any front gardens having low walls or hedges to aid natural surveillance.

The layout should be formed of secure perimeter blocks, with dwellings having their principal elevations facing the street, with active rooms (e.g kitchen, living room) providing natural surveillance of the street. Vulnerable rear and side boundaries to the street should be avoided where possible. Where these cannot be avoided, robust defensive barriers and defensive planting should be in place, and windows introduced to side boundaries to avoid blank frontages (which can be attractive to antisocial behaviour).

If rear access paths are required to access the rear gardens of properties, the routes must be gated to the front of the building line, and secured with a robust key operated lock, operable from both sides. Shared rear access points should be avoided, but where they are unavoidable they should serve no more than 4 dwellings.

- **Defensible Space and Planting:** There should be clear definition between the public and private realm. Where the public or semi-private realm adjoins private areas of the development, defensible space and planting, to a depth of at least 1m should be provided. This will provide an area of 'stand-off', marking the change of ownership and therefore the acceptable activity that is associated with it, protecting the privacy and security of occupants whilst reducing the potential for neighbourhood disputes. This is particularly important where parking areas or public spaces abut vulnerable side or rear residential boundaries.
- **Apartments:** The illustrative layout suggests that there will not be any large apartment blocks within the proposed scheme, with flats limited to small blocks. In any case, where apartment blocks are proposed, the security of their access needs to be carefully considered and information provided on: entry systems, compartmentation, postage and deliveries, and secure cycle and bins storage.
- **Lighting:** Lighting throughout the development should meet the general standards of BS5489-1:2020. Lighting plans should be provided which should set out how this standard will be achieved not only on adopted highways, but also un-adopted roads and parking courts. Bollard lighting is not an appropriate lighting method, and should be avoided. Not only can they be damaged by reversing vehicles, more critically they do not provide sufficient light at the right height to aid facial recognition and reduce the fear of crime. It also does not deter crime and antisocial behaviour.

To assist with the detailed design of the scheme, I would recommend the applicant consult the Secured By Design Home Guide 2024.

The above comments are made on behalf of Thames Valley Police and relate to designing out crime only. I hope that you find these comments of assistance. If you have any queries relating to crime prevention design, please do not hesitate to contact myself.

Yours faithfully,

Dan Washington | Designing Out Crime Officer