

Introduction

Westfields had previously acquired this derelict site and secured a hybrid outline/ detailed planning permission to convert a partially constructed motel building to form 20 residential apartments. Plan-A were approached to advise on a planning strategy to secure approval for additional development on the remainder of the site. Through a carefully considered strategy, we were able to unlock a complicated planning position to facilitate the delivery of a comprehensive scheme for the whole site.



The Site

The site is located in a prominent position on the A40 between Burford and Northleach, in the Cotswolds AONB. The partially completed, vandalised motel building at the eastern end of the site, had lain neglected for many years. The remainder of the site comprised a desolate open space including areas of hardstanding, excavated pits, and scrubby vegetation, forming a notable eyesore in the landscape.

The Proposals



We submitted an application on behalf of Westfields Homes, a privately owned Hertfordshire-based house building company with a track record of delivering exceptionally designed homes. The scheme was designed by local architects Coombes Everitt, with landscaping input from MHP Design.



The scheme comprises a mix of houses and apartments, along with a village shop. The design of the scheme is reflective of an agricultural farmhouse and associated farmyard style of development, incorporating parking barns set in a courtyard arrangement. The proposals include a private treatment plant on land to the south of the A40 to deal with foul drainage generated by the development. Off-site highway improvement works, designed by OPUS International, include a new dedicated right hand turning lane in the A40 and better visibility at the junction with the road leading towards the site and village of Windrush.



Our Approach

Planning permission had previously been granted for the conversion of the motel building to apartments, in tandem with a restaurant, and petrol filling station. Occupation of the approved apartments was however dependant on the delivery of the restaurant and PFS, which the client no longer wished to pursue.

The key challenge was to build a case to justify further residential development on the western portion of the site in the context of a restrictive policy environment, where market housing in sensitive rural settings would normally be refused. At the same time, it was important not to undermine the previously approved apartment scheme, despite the need for revised access, parking and layout arrangements to serve both phases of development.

Aside from restrictive planning policies, the site was challenging in other respects. Given the site’s proximity to the A40, it was important to be able to demonstrate that the proposals could deliver a good quality living environment, particularly with respect to noise. Structural landscaping, the layout and orientation of the buildings, along with sound insulation and ventilation measures were incorporated within design. Detailed environmental studies also needed to be commissioned, and remediation measures agreed to address potential contamination issues arising from previous uses at the site. An important factor that helped secure a successful outcome was gaining the support of the local community and Parish Council through early and on-going engagement. Following feedback from officers at the District Council, revisions were made to the scheme that addressed initial concerns.



Having gained the support of key stakeholders, the application was approved under delegated powers, negating the risk and inherent delay that referral to the Council’s Planning Committee would have entailed. We provided a robust case to establish what a fair contribution towards off-site affordable housing would be, and once agreed, planning permission was duly granted for 12 new dwellings plus a retail unit at the site.

We have subsequently pursued applications to secure improvements to the previously approved scheme for the motel building’s conversion and also assisted the client in discharging the large number of planning conditions arising from the complex planning history. Development at the site is now well advanced and some of the new homes are now occupied. We also secured permission that allows the retail unit to trade as a restaurant as well as a shop. This extension to the permitted uses of the building has proved popular and the Outpost is operating successfully – proving to be an asset for residents at the site and the community as a whole.