
APPLICATION NO.	P08/W0382
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL PLANNING PERMISSION
REGISTERED	15.04.08
PARISH	FOREST HILL
WARD MEMBER(S)	Ms A Purse
APPLICANT	W Associates Limited
SITE	Badgers Close, Main Street, Forest Hill
PROPOSAL	Proposed conversion of communal facilities to form 1 no. 2 bed flat. Construction of 4 no. balconies, and 2 no Juliette balconies
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	458448/207812
OFFICER	Miss G Napier

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the officer recommendation conflicts with that of the Parish Council.
- 1.2 The site lies on the southern side of Main Street and the existing flats are set back from the road by some 17 metres. There is a flat roof garage at the front of the site and a parking area for residents to the north east. There are residential dwellings on either side of the site and open fields to the rear. The site lies within the Forest Hill Conservation Area and the Oxford Green Belt.
- 1.3 The site is identified on the Ordnance Survey extract **attached** at Appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The current application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the communal facilities on the ground floor to a 2 bed flat. The building currently accommodates a total of eleven flats, five at ground floor level and six at first floor level.
- 2.2 Permission is also sought for the construction of 4 balconies to the south east elevation and 2 Juliette balconies to the south west elevation. The existing windows on these elevations are to be replaced by French Doors allowing access on to the full balconies and to open the doors on to the Juliette balconies.
- 2.3 At ground floor level the existing door to the south east elevation is to be replaced by a window, a new window is proposed at ground floor level within the south west elevation and the door to the north east elevation is to be blocked up.
- 2.4 A copy of the submitted plans is **attached** at Appendix 2 along with the applicant's design and access statement.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Parish Council -

Recommends refusal: The proposal will potentially increase the number of vehicles entering and exiting the site and appears to involve the removal of 2 trees.

Existing parking pressures on Main Street, dimensions of the street and significant volumes of traffic at certain times of the day make it undesirable to increase the number of vehicles entering and leaving the site.

The plans do not show how parking spaces will be marked out for residents and visitors bearing in mind existing parking pressures in Main Street.

The location plan does not show all surrounding properties and the application does not reflect the changed appearance of the south west elevation.

OCC Highways Officer -

‘Visibility at the existing access serving the site is sub-standard when looking to the left; however Main Street is traffic calmed and speeds of vehicles appear to be around 25mph. As the proposal is for one additional unit to the existing – I am of the opinion that recommending refusal on highway grounds.... would not be sustainable at appeal; Therefore I have no objections to this application in principle’.

Initial concerns relating to size of one parking space but these have been addressed by confirmation that the area provided by the demolished building will be used for parking.

Further comments

The parking is fine as the new flats will have their own spaces and levels for the existing flats remain the same.

Neighbours - Objection (3)

Strong objection to the proposal to ‘unnecessarily convert’ part of the building to an extra flat. The proposal is attempting to squeeze too many car-owning residents into one site. The number of flats should be limited eg.6. Concerned over the risk caused by extra cars. Twelve newly renovated flats would result in an extra 24 cars coming out of the site regularly causing inconvenience for neighbours and a danger for local children. It is unacceptable that the plans propose the cutting down of 2 cherry trees. Objection to the proposed enlarged windows as this will create additional overlooking from French doors and Juliette balconies. Use of the French doors will increase noise levels and would be ‘unbearably intrusive’. Requests assurance that the existing screening is not damaged in the future.

Converting the property in to residential flats and increasing the total by converting the communal area will create a large additional amount of traffic along Main Street which is already congested. The additional traffic will be a hazard to school children. There is inadequate provision for parking for both residents and visitors.

Object to the proposal on the following grounds: Noise pollution from additional cars and occupiers due to the

change of use from elderly persons flats, pollution on the environment, congestion and traffic problems on Main Street and parking areas, height differences of the properties – cars breaking through the fence on to the neighbouring property, insufficient turning area.

Forestry Officer - No objection to the loss of the two trees. Landscaping condition for replacement of the trees on the site should be attached to any planning permission.

Environmental Health - No objection, comments regarding hours of construction.

OCC (Archaeology) - No objection.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

P07/W1443/LD. Use of the building for unrestricted residential (C3) purposes. Certificate of Lawful Use or Development on 05 February 2008. P71/M0567. Proposed erection of one block of ten old people's flats and one warden's flat. Access. Planning Permission on 08 December 1971.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted SOLP Policies

G2: Protection and enhancement of the environment

G6: Promoting good design

GB2: Openness of the Green Belt

CON7: Impact on Conservation Area

H6: New housing

H11: Subdivision of dwellings and multiple occupation

T2: Transport requirements for new development

PPS1 – Delivering sustainable development

PPPS3 – Housing

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 **The main issues in this case are:**

- **Whether the principle of the development is acceptable**
- **Neighbour impact**
- **Parking/Highway issues**
- **Amenity**
- **Green Belt issues**
- **Impact on Conservation Area**

6.2 **Principle.** Forest Hill is not one of the villages where new housing development is permitted due to the lack of facilities and services that are available in the area (Policy H6). However, the proposal to create one additional flat within the existing building requires internal alterations only and Policy H11 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan permits the subdivision of existing dwellings and conversion to multiple occupation within settlements subject to the following criteria.

- The development would not harm the amenity of the occupants of nearby properties;
- It is appropriate in terms of the size of property, internal layout, access, amenity space and car parking provision;

- The development would not adversely affect the character of the building or surrounding residential area; and
- Would not result in environmental or highway objections.

6.3 **Impact on neighbours.** Neighbour concerns relate to the change in occupants, the additional flat and the impact these factors will have on their own amenity. The flats were previously occupied by elderly people and neighbours have commented that only 2 or 3 of the previous residents had cars. The original permission for the flats did not restrict the use of the building to elderly people's accommodation and as such the owners of the building are free to sell the units on the open market. A recent Certificate of Lawful Use confirms this unrestricted use.

The current application is solely for the creation of one additional unit and the addition of a number of balconies with the provision of larger windows to gain access to balconies. A dense conifer hedge lies on the boundary between the flats and Stone Crest and the balconies to the rear will also face out on to trees and the fields beyond. As such, there will be no material increase in overlooking.

6.4 **Noise.** Neighbours are also concerned that the balconies will result in an increase in noise levels emanating from the flats to the detriment of their amenities. The balconies are to be erected to the rear (south west) elevation of the building which faces on to fields at the rear and the 2 Juliette balconies and French doors which replace existing windows will not provide any space for an outdoor seating area.

Given the location of the full balconies and the nature of the Juliette balconies as well as the fact that the French doors replace existing windows, the balconies will not have a significantly greater material impact on the amenities of the occupants of neighbouring properties than the existing situation in your officer's view.

6.5 **Amenity provision.** The South Oxfordshire Design Guide requires 25 m sq of amenity area per flat. The amenity area for the existing 11 flats measures some 400 m sq which amounts to approximately 36 m sq per unit. The current proposal provides a further amenity area for a number of the flats in the form of a balcony and as such the size of the amenity area for the new flat will exceed the minimum requirement. It should also be noted that the flats are located some 200 metres away from the local recreation ground.

6.6 **Character of the building.** The creation of the new flat will involve the blocking up of the existing door to the north east elevation and the creation of a new window to the south west elevation. These modest alterations to the exterior of the building are in keeping with the character of the building and the surrounding residential area and are acceptable in your officer's view.

6.7 **Highway Issues.** Neighbour concerns relate to additional parking on Main Street where there is already a perceived parking problem and a high volume of traffic at certain times in the day. There are 11 flats within the current building and it is proposed to convert the communal facilities area in to a 2 bed flat. Two additional parking spaces are proposed at the front of the building and the existing flat roof garage is to be demolished and a further parking space created. Two additional parking spaces are required for the 2 bed flat and as such the additional flat will not result in the displacement of vehicles on to Main Street in your officer's view.

The County Highways Officer has no objection to the proposal on the grounds that the new flats will have their own spaces and levels for the existing flats will remain the same.

For the above reasons the principle of the proposal is acceptable in accordance with Policy H11 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

6.8 **Green Belt Issues.** The building is to remain largely unchanged other than for the addition of 4 balconies and 2 Juliette balconies. The full balconies to the south east elevation will add a very small amount of volume to the building and having regard to its location within the centre of the village, the balconies would not have a detrimental impact on the openness of the Oxford Green Belt in accordance with Policy GB2 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

6.9 **Impact on Conservation Area.** The alterations to the exterior of the property are limited and will mainly affect the south west and south east elevations which are not highly visible from public view points within the Conservation Area. Having regard to the limited impact on the external appearance of the building, the proposal would not detract from the character or appearance of the Forest Hill Conservation Area in accordance with Policy CON7 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 Officers recommend that planning permission be granted because the principle of development is acceptable and subject to the attached conditions such a development would be appropriate to the site and its surroundings in accordance with development plan policies, would not be unneighbourly or cause parking problems.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **Planning Permission is recommended subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement within 3 years**
2. **Parking as shown on the plans**
3. **Limit on hours of construction**
4. **Landscaping – Replacement of lost trees**

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