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<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	P11/E0321
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	Minor
<b>REGISTERED</b>	2 March 2011
<b>PARISH</b>	Chinnor
<b>WARD MEMBERS</b>	Mr Geoff Andrews Mr Christopher Hood
<b>APPLICANT/AGENT</b>	L K Humm-Gaska
<b>SITE</b>	51 High Street, Chinnor, OX39 4DJ
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Proposed conversion of retail unit into 2 one bedroom flats.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	None
<b>OFFICER</b>	Miss Charlotte Crapper

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to Planning Committee as the Officer's recommendation conflicts with the views of the Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application site, 51 High Street, Chinnor, is currently a vacant property with a permitted use as an office. Situated near to the junction of High Street, Church Road and Keens Lane the premises is a two storey building with no garden area or off road parking available to it. A site plan is **attached** at Appendix A.
- 1.3 Situated approximately 18m from No.51, on the corner of Church Road, is a parade of shops including a Spa newsagent, Lloyds Pharmacy, a bakery and butchers amongst other units with a parking area in front of the shops. Adjacent to the property, to the east of the site, are another 2 retail units currently in use as a hairdressers and estate agents and on the opposite side of the road is the village hall with an area for public off road parking.
- 1.4 The adjacent property to No.51, Russell's Close is a detached dwelling as are other properties further along the High Street to the north and directly opposite the application site. The property is not listed but is located within the Chinnor Conservation Area.

### 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of vacant office space into 2 one bedroom flats. Access to the first floor flat would be through the existing front door. Access to the ground floor flat would be via an existing side access (north west elevation). Some internal alteration is proposed with an area of flat roof along the north eastern elevation (right hand side) at ground floor level. A copy of the proposed plans are **attached** at Appendix B.

### 3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 **Chinnor Parish Council** – The application should be refused. No parking available. Parking across the road is not available for overnight parking and is not permanent parking for neighbours. This cannot be used as a parking alternative.
- 3.3 **OCC Highways Liaison Officer** – No Objections. The proposed parking is below the adopted parking standards. There was a house in this location and more recently the premises functioned as a retail unit. Therefore it needs to be determined if an

intensification of use is involved in the conversion and that as a consequence an increase in the level of parking is needed. Limited on street parking is available in designated bays and the location is relatively sustainable in terms of alternative means of travel. Residents will be aware upon tenancy of the lack of car parking provision for the flats.

3.4 **Waste Management Officer** – The properties will need to house a refuse and recycling wheeled bin set each and present at the nearest adopted road.

3.5 **Contaminated land Officer** – A contaminated land investigation to ensure the land is safe and suitable for the intended use is required. As a minimum this will require a desk study and site walkover.

3.6 **Neighbours** – 1 neighbour has no objection in principle to the change of use from retail unit into domestic accommodation. However another 2 neighbours, whilst not objecting, have some concerns with regards to parking in the area.

- No front or rear garden or parking space, nor any place to build them.
- Double yellow lines at the front of the property therefore not possible for occupiers to park regularly outside their own building.
- Two public car parks available nearby but these are usually full and have restricted parking hours. To have vehicles park in them permanently would be a great inconvenience to users of the other village amenities nearby.
- Severe overdevelopment of the High Street conservation area and that any development of the site should allow for 2 off road parking spaces per dwelling to prevent serious impact on the local traffic flow and increasing our concerns for safety on the approach to the complicated junction of Keens Lane, High Street and Church Road.

3.7 A further letter was received from a neighbour having an objection in principle – as joint neighbour of the adjoining property we would like to object to the over development of the above application. The property is not suitable for tiny flats and would be better used as one dwelling house as it was in the past. The parking in this trading area is very precious and the small business owners need all parking kept for customers, at peak times it becomes very congested. Also the party wall is involved between 51 and 53 High Street.

#### 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1
- **P69/M0670** - change of use from residential to offices - Planning Permission on 17 December 1969
  - **P03/E0118** - Construction of disabled access to existing side door - Planning Permission on 05 August 2003

#### 5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

##### 5.1 **South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP) Policies**

G2 – Protection and enhancement of the environment

G6 – Promoting good design

D1 – Good Design and Local Distinctiveness

D2 – Vehicle and bicycle parking

D3 – Plot cover and garden areas

D4 – Privacy and daylight

D8 – Energy, Water and materials efficient design

D10 – Waste Management

E6 – Retention of Employment Sites

H4 – Housing within the built-up limits of the 4 main towns and larger villages outside

the Green Belt  
CON7 – Conservation Area  
EP8 – Contaminated Land  
T1 & T2 – Transport requirements for new developments

### **South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008 (SODG)**

#### **6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 The main considerations in the determination of this application are;
- i) Whether the principle of conversion from office space to residential accommodation is acceptable.**
  - ii) Whether the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding street scene and Conservation Area**
  - iii) Whether the proposal satisfies the amenity requirements set out under Policy H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.**
  - iv) Other considerations**
- 6.2 **Principle of Development**  
The property was previously a single dwelling house but was granted planning permission and changed to offices in 1969. Since this date the premises have been a bank, estate agent, and until approximately 18 months ago were in use as an optician.
- 6.3 The agent has submitted information on how the premises have been let stating that there has been little or no interest in the site in recent months. Policy E6 of the SOLP states that proposals for the change of use of redundant land or buildings in employment or service trade use to non-employment uses will be permitted if i) the site is less than 0.25ha and buildings under 500 square metres and in the towns of Didcot, Henley, Thame or Wallingford or ii) the existing use is no longer economically viable and the site has been marketed at a reasonable price for at least a year for that and any other suitable employment or service trade uses.
- 6.4 As the site is not located within one of the 4 main towns named in the Policy and the site is less than 0.25 hectares in size I am of the opinion that criterion i) would not apply in this instance. The agent has submitted marketing information to show how the premises have been marketed and at what price in accordance with Criterion ii) of Policy E6. Having compared this price with other properties of a similar size and location in the district using the 'Vacant Property Register' I am satisfied that this is a reasonable valuation considering the facilities, size and location of the site. In addition there has been little interest in the lease for a considerable time period reflecting changes in the current economic market. Officers consider that the details submitted satisfy the requirements of Policy E6 of the Local Plan.
- 6.5 Policy H4 of the Local Plan has regard to new housing within the District. Provided the criteria of this policy can be met, new dwellings within the built up areas of the larger villages will be permitted. The criteria for assessment includes: i) an important open space of public, environmental, ecological value is not lost, nor an important public view spoiled, ii) the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development are in keeping with its surroundings, iii) the character of the area is not adversely affected, iv) there are no overriding amenity, environmental or highway objections, and v) if the proposal constitutes backland development it would not create problems of privacy and access and would not extend the built limits of the settlement.

- 6.6 There would be little alteration to the external appearance of the property as the building is only proposed for a change of use with minor external alterations to the rear. The building is already in situ and its appearance is relatively domestic at present. I am of the opinion that an important view would not be spoilt and the minor alterations to the rear would be in keeping in terms of their scale and design with the existing building and surrounding properties. No backland development is proposed. Officers are therefore of the opinion that the proposals would comply with criteria i), ii), iii), and v) of Policy H4.
- 6.7 The property has functioned as a house in the past and more recently as a retail/office unit therefore one has to determine if an intensification of the use is involved in the conversion of the premises and that as a consequence if an increase in the level of parking is required.
- 6.8 The highways officer has advised that if the property becomes a residential unit it will be a source of future journeys rather than a destination as at present. Having been a bank and estate agent in the past, both of which provide a destination point for more than one user at a time, there would have been a number of people using its facilities at any one time, including employees. This would often have resulted in more than four people, the number of possible occupants of the proposed flats, at any one time at the site.
- 6.9 The highways officer has concluded that the property is located within a sustainable location with parking available in the vicinity. In addition he comments on the ability to control unauthorised parking given the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) (double yellow lines) at the front of the property.
- 6.10 The highways officer is of the opinion that there are designated bays within the area, along with an area of public parking, and that the location is relatively sustainable with access to local services and the availability of alternative means of transport to the private car. Residents will be aware upon occupation of the lack of car parking provision for the flats.
- 6.11 On balance the proposal is unlikely to result in a significant increase in the number of vehicles parked on the street, therefore the highways officer has concluded that there is no highways based objection to the proposal. Having regard to the concerns raised by the Parish Council and the neighbours and the comments offered by the highways officer, Officers are satisfied that there would be little increase in the number of on street parking at any one time and that the relevant requirements of criterion iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP have been met.
- Impact upon surrounding Conservation Area and street scene**
- 6.12 The property was previously in residential use and its external appearance is that of a residential dwelling house, similar to others along High street.
- 6.13 The proposed area of flat roof would not be in accordance with advice contained within the Design Guide, however, it would be relatively small in scale and would be located to the rear of the property. I am satisfied that it would not be prominent within the surrounding area or overly visible within the street scene. It would match materials already existing on the property and whilst not of a traditional style for inclusion within such a location, I am of the opinion that given its size and location it would have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area.

- 6.14 Whilst it is accepted that the area can be busy and can get congested at peak times the area is a service provider to the surrounding community and that a certain level of traffic is unavoidable. However, there is unlikely to be a significant increase in the number of cars at any one time, therefore officers consider this would have little increased impact upon the character of the area.

**Impact upon neighbouring amenity**

- 6.15 The property was previously in residential occupation. The reversion of the premises to a residential use and the inclusion of a flat roof to the rear would have little direct impact upon the adjacent premises, therefore officers are satisfied that there would be little detrimental impact upon neighbouring amenity in accordance with Policy H4 of the SOLP.

**Other Considerations**

- 6.16 The waste management officer has advised that waste and recycling facilities are required for both the proposed dwellings. The agent has advised that there is space for this facility to be accommodated to the side of the property which will have little impact upon neighbouring amenity and would be screened from view by an existing side gate and fence.
- 6.17 Residential development is regarded in Planning Policy Statement 23 (PPS23) as a particularly sensitive use to any land contamination, therefore a precautionary approach should be adopted and that a condition requiring a contaminated land desk study be placed on any permission to ensure that the land does not pose a potential risk to the occupants of the development or to the environment.

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The proposal complies with the relevant Development Plan policies and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the proposed conversion of office space to 2 one bedroom flats would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the existing building, the surrounding street scene or the Conservation Area, would have little detrimental impact upon neighbouring amenity and would not result in a significant increase in on street parking.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 **Grant Planning Permission subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Standard 3 year time limit**
2. **Approved plans**
3. **Materials of extension are to match the existing**
4. **Location of refuse and recycling facilities to be agreed prior to commencement**
5. **Prior to commencement a contaminated land assessment must be carried out**

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