
APPLICATION NO.	P11/W0300
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL
REGISTERED	27.04.2011
PARISH	WALLINGFORD
WARD MEMBER(S)	Mr Imran Lokhon Mr Marcus Harris
APPLICANT	Wallingford Rowing Club Limited
SITE	Wallingford Rowing Club Thames Street Wallingford
PROPOSAL	Replacement gymnasium (as amended by drawing no.02A/07/09 and stair detail received 22 March 2010).
AMENDMENTS	
GRID REFERENCE	460860189215
OFFICER	Mrs S Crawford

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application has been referred to the Committee at the discretion of the Development Manager due to the level of local support.
- 1.2 The existing gymnasium is a single storey structure constructed from corrugated sheeting and is located on the east side of the Cattle-market car park, within the Wallingford conservation area.

The structure is currently surrounded on three sides by the Thames Street car park, and Thames Street lies at a lower level on the fourth side, giving the gym a slightly elevated appearance when approaching along the street from the north.

Opposite the site are a number of listed buildings including Cromwell Lodge (Grade II), a row of cottages and malthouse now converted to the Rowing Club (Grade II), and Castle Priory (Grade II*).

- 1.3 The site is identified on the Ordnance Survey Extract **attached** at Appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the replacement of the existing building with a new two storey building to provide a gymnasium at ground floor with a weights room above. The new building would measure some 15 metres in length by 6.3 metres in width. The ridge height would be approx 6.7 m above 46.50 datum (the existing building is some 15m x 5.3m and 4.1m above 46.50 datum). The building would be constructed in brick under a tiled roof with half hips. Reduced copies of the plans accompanying the application are **attached** at Appendix 2. A full set of the papers submitted with the application and the consultation responses can be viewed on the Council's website.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Wallingford Town Council Approve.

OCC (Archaeology)	This is an area of considerable archaeological interest. Any planning permission should be subject to a condition requiring a stage scheme of archaeological investigation.
Economic development (comments from P09/W1220)	Supports the proposal to provide improved facilities provided that the scheme is in line with the relevant planning policies.
Forestry Officer (comments from P09/W1220)	No objection subject to a condition to secure replacement trees of a comparable size as existing and of an appropriate species. No observations on current scheme to date.
Neighbour Supporters (17)	The existing building is unsightly and new facilities would benefit the local community. Less excavation will enable archaeology to remain in situ.
Local support	200 seperately signed copies of a standard letter

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 P09/W1220 – Replacement gymnasium – Approved
P10/W0041/CA – Demolition of gymnasium – Conservation Area Consent
P53/B0733 – Erection of a storage warehouse – Planning permission

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

- 5.1 Adopted SOLP Policies
G2 – Protection of District’s resources, G6 – Quality of design and local distinctiveness, EP8 – Contaminated land, D1 – Principles of good design, D2 – Parking for vehicles and cycles, D8 – Conservation and efficient design, D9 – Renewable energy, CON5 – setting of listed buildings, CON7 – development in conservation areas, CON11 and CON13 – archaeology, CF2 – provision of community facilities, T1 transport.
South Oxfordshire Design Guide

PPS5 – Planning for the Historic Environment.

South Oxfordshire Design Guide.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 The main issues in this case are;

- Whether the principle of development is acceptable
- Impact on conservation area and setting of listed buildings
- Archaeology
- Impact on trees
- Other material considerations

- 6.2 **Principle.** There is no objection to the removal of the existing building as it detracts from the character of the area; conservation area consent has already been granted for the demolition of the existing building (P10/W0041/CA). There is no objection to the principle of a replacement building subject to the constraints on the site. In fact planning

permission has already been granted for a building that gives the same amount of floor space and facilities as now proposed (P09/W1220). The consented scheme for the new gym is partially dug into the ground to reduce the overall height and bulk of the building. The ridge height of the consented scheme would be approx 5m above 46.50 datum (the existing building is some 15m x 5.3m and 4.1m above 46.50 datum). The building now proposed would be some 6.7m above 46.50 datum which is 2.6 metres (8 ½ feet) higher than the existing building.

6.3 **Impact on conservation area and setting of listed buildings**

This part of the Conservation Area is largely open; the existing gym is surrounded on three sides by the former cattle market car park. The existing building is not attractive and is itself out of keeping with the general character of the area; it is however a relatively low lying building and its impact limited. The buildings with which the proposal would be most closely associated with are on Thames Street (opposite the site), and are modest 2 storey cottages, including the rowing club (a former wharf building). These are listed in their own right, and provide a very traditional sense of scale. The only larger buildings in the immediate area are the grand riverside houses set away from the site, and/or in their own substantial grounds (Castle Priory and the now subdivided Riverside residence). The draft Conservation Area Appraisal specifically identifies the character of the road-facing properties on the northern part of Thames Street area as being of modest scale.

The bulk and scale of the proposed two storey building is out of keeping with the surrounding buildings, more akin to a block of flats, or modern office building than the domestic and intimate scale of properties on Thames Street, Wood Street, and St Leonard's Lane. It would over-dominate the terrace opposite, the ridge being significantly higher.

In pre-application discussions on the consented scheme your officers expressed concern in relation to the height of the building and a condition on the planning permission limits the height of the approved building to 5 metres, this height was approximately 50cm higher than the existing building. The sunken ground floor was agreed as it retained the single storey external feel of the building but had the advantage of providing the additional floor area required by the rowing club. The current proposal ignores your officer's previous concerns and results in a full two storey structure. Aesthetically this is accentuated by the comparatively shallow pitched roof and high eaves giving the building a bulky character.

6.4 **Archaeology.** This is a sensitive site and it is highly likely that archaeological deposits will be encountered and disturbed by this development. The previous application, which included a watching brief condition, involved a considerable amount of ground disturbance associated with the lower floor, in excess of 1.5m. This application, although involving ground disturbance to a depth of around 0.5m, will have far less of an impact on any surviving archaeological deposits. It is still possible that this depth will impact on some archaeological deposits. However, there were suitable conditions which addressed the County Archaeologist's concerns on this matter on the approved scheme. All proposals considered harmful should be weighed against the potential public benefit provided in accordance with PPS5 and its accompanying guidance. The rowing club is a local facility of some importance. However, the extant permission provides the space necessary. The only material benefit therefore, is the minimisation of the impact on potential archaeology. I do feel that there is considerable benefit in minimising excavation, regardless of conditions on the extant permission, but this is not sufficient to outweigh the impact upon the surrounding area in this instance as the harm to the public realm would be readily apparent.

6.5 **Impact on Trees.** The sycamore trees on the site are not the subject of a tree preservation order but are protected because they are within the conservation area.

There is so little space around the existing building and proposed building that the retention of the existing trees during construction is impossible.

The trees are growing in a very prominent location contributing significantly to the conservation area and have a high amenity value. It is, however, acknowledged that both of the trees have structural faults that will reduce their safe life expectancy.

The consented scheme required replacements of an equivalent size by condition. The trees would also require specially designed tree pits given the restricted area for growth. The current proposal provides for the replacement of one tree only which is a retrograde step and will further detract from the character of the conservation area.

Other material considerations.

Need for changes economic factors. In support of the application the agent argues that the current proposal will avoid unnecessary costs and delay. The agent considers that the 2.5 m trench foundations required in the approved scheme will increase the build costs in the region of £25,000 - £50,000 and would take more time than a normal construction; the rowing club will be without their training facilities throughout the construction phase. Whilst these factors are acknowledged, in your officer's view, they would not outweigh the permanent harm of the development to the character of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings.

Public support. There is a significant amount of public, local support for the facilities. The council also support the provision of the facilities and a planning permission has already been granted for the same level of facility.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Your officers recommend that planning permission is refused because a planning permission has already been granted for a replacement building that gives the equivalent amount of floorspace. The building now proposed is significantly larger than the existing building and is out of keeping with the character and scale of other development in the vicinity and would detract from the character of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings opposite the site. The economic benefits and the potential to reduce the impact on archaeological deposits of the current scheme do not outweigh the harm created by the proposed building. The local support for the building is acknowledged but your officers consider that the amenity can be adequately provided by the consented scheme in a manner that is not harmful to the character of the conservation area or the setting of listed buildings.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 **Officers recommend that Planning Permission is refused for the following reason:**

1. **That having regard to the height, scale and proportions of the proposed building (over and above the consented scheme) the proposal represents a dominant building that is out of keeping with the surrounding development in terms of scale and design. As such the building would detract from the character and appearance of the Wallingford Conservation Area and the setting of the listed buildings opposite (5, 6, 7 and boat club, Thames Street) contrary to Policies G2, G6, CON5 and CON7 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and advice contained in PPS5 'Planning for the Historic Environment' and its accompanying guidance.**

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