

SUBJECT DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REPORTS ITEM 6

REPORT OF Head of Planning & Building Control

APPLICATION NO.	P11/E0167
APPLICATION TYPE	Full
REGISTERED	3 rd February 2011
PARISH	Henley-on-Thames
WARD MEMBERS	Joan Bland Elizabeth Hodgkin
APPLICANT	Chesterton Commercial (Oxon) Ltd
SITE	Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames
PROPOSALS	Alterations to provide revised parking layout for 9 parking spaces including a change of use of land to private car parking
AMENDMENTS	Drawings TR8100678/SK09 and TR8100678/SK10
GRID REFERENCE	476075/183007
OFFICER	Tom Wyatt

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the Officer’s recommendations conflict with the views of the Town Council.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) comprises a triangle of land to the front of 94-102 (evens) Bell Street. This land currently forms part of the public highway and comprises 10 parking bays, and an area mostly laid to grass with a small number of individual trees.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks permission to provide a revised parking layout comprising nine spaces and a change of use of the land to private car parking. Amended plans have been submitted, which now show the provision of 9 parking spaces in place of the 10 originally proposed, and which show a much reduced encroachment onto the grassed area of the site. A copy of the current application plans and the originally submitted Design and Access Statement, which provides some background to this application, are **attached** at Appendix B whilst a copy of the original plans submitted under this application are **attached** at Appendix C. All other documents associated with the application can be viewed on the council’s website, www.southoxon.gov.uk.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 **Henley-on-Thames Town Council** – Objects ‘on the grounds that the development is both un-neighbourly and out of character in a conservation area and would lead to the degradation of green space at the entrance to the town. The proposed development may undermine the roots of the trees that are to be retained while the access is considered to be dangerous for pedestrians’.

The Town Council also objected to the original plans and first amendment.

- 3.2 **Henley Society** – Objects. The parking should revert back to being parallel with the kerb. The proposal would affect the safety of pedestrians and would impact on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.
- 3.3 **OCC Highway Liaison Officer** – No objections subject to conditions. The proposed layout ensures that vehicles can manoeuvre out of the spaces utilising a shared surface.
- 3.4 **Forestry Officer** – No objections, however, it would be desirable to replace the two existing lime trees, which are of poor condition with suitable replacement trees. A landscaping condition should be attached to any planning permission.
- 3.5 **Conservation Officer** – No objection.
- 3.6 **OCC Archaeologist** – No comments.
- 3.7 **Environmental Health Officer** – No observations.
- 3.8 **Open Spaces Society** – Objected to the original plans and first amendment based on the loss of the green area.
- 3.9 **Henley Archaeological and Historical Group** – Objects due to the impact on trees, proposed creation of a shared surface in terms of altering the historic townscape and potentially putting the listed buildings at risk of vehicle damage. The proposal would harm the character of the Conservation Area.
- 3.10 **Neighbours** – 52 letters of objection received to the original plans raising the following concerns:

- loss of green space and trees
- impact on the conservation area and listed buildings
- impact on air quality
- impact on highway safety and congestion
- green area already eroded without permission

32 letters of objection received to the first amendment essentially raising the same concerns as above but also raising a concern about the narrowness of the parking space.

8 letters of objection received to the current scheme primarily in relation to the use of the pavement for vehicle manoeuvring.

3 letters of support received.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 There is no planning history directly relevant to this proposal. However, the current applicant has submitted several recent applications for the restoration and conversion works to 94, and 96 Bell Street and 2a Bell Lane.

5.0 **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

- 5.1 Policies of the Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP):
- G1, G2, G6, C9, EP1, EP2, EP8, D1, CON5, CON7, T1, T2

5.2 Government Guidance:
-PPS1, PPS5, PPG13

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance
-South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008 (SODG)

6.0 **PLANNING ISSUES**

6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are:

1. The impact on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area
2. The impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers
3. Highway considerations
4. Other material considerations

The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Site and Surrounding Area

6.2 The application site lies within the Henley Main Conservation Area and is immediately to the front of a terrace of listed buildings (92-102 Bell Street (evens)). The site currently comprises a triangular area of grass and an informal parking area to the front of the listed terrace. There are two holly trees and two lime trees on the site as well as a small number of low level shrubs. The site is prominent in public views from the adjacent highway and provides an attractive feature within the street scene and this part of the Conservation Area. Policy CON7 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that development does not harm the character and appearance of a conservation area whilst Policy CON5 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that development does not have an adverse impact on the setting of a listed building.

6.3 In respect of both the original scheme and the first amended scheme, the proposed parking would have resulted in the loss of much of the grassed area of the site, and would have left little space for the replacement of the existing trees. The retention of the grassed area is important in terms of maintaining the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area and the attractive setting of the listed terrace, and therefore the erosion of the grassed area would have a detrimental impact on these heritage assets. Understandably the council received a large number of objections to the proposals in respect of this issue.

6.4 The current scheme has reduced the number of parking spaces to nine and largely maintains the integrity of the grass area. The spaces towards the northern end of the site encroach onto the grassed area by approximately 0.5 metres, however, the proposed staggered parking arrangement would enable new grass to be laid such that there would actually be an increase in the amount of grass over the existing situation. With the exception of a poor quality holly tree, the trees on the site can now be successfully retained although the Forestry Officer has suggested that the two poor quality lime trees are replaced and this would improve the appearance of the site in the long term.

6.5 The current scheme has a minimal impact on the grassed area and as such Officers consider that the scheme would now conserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed terrace.

6.6 To avoid the need to encroach onto the grassed area, the applicant is now proposing that the public footway to the front of 92-102 Bell Street is provided as a shared surface to enable the necessary manoeuvring to take place over the footway. Therefore, the hardstanding associated with the parking area would be built up to the level of the footway, which is already the case in respect of much of the hardsurfacing. However,

the existing materials of the footway would be retained with a new aggregate formulation bound surface being provided for the parking areas, which will be more attractive than the existing tarmac surface.

The Impact on the Amenity of Neighbouring Occupiers

- 6.7 There are currently ten parking spaces provided for on the site and this proposal would reduce that to nine spaces. As such there should be a small reduction in the number of vehicle movements associated with the parking area to the benefit of the adjacent residential occupiers. The retention of the grassed area and the new surface for the parking area would provide a more attractive frontage to the adjacent residential properties, which would also improve the outlook from the front of these dwellings.

Highway Considerations

- 6.8 In order to avoid encroachment onto the grassed area whilst still retaining nine parking spaces on the site it has been necessary to allow for manoeuvring on the existing footway. Such manoeuvring already occurs in respect of the existing situation, and formalising the parking area with one less space and providing for a clearer distinction between the surface of the parking area and the footway should ensure that the proposal is acceptable in terms of highway safety.
- 6.9 The Highway Liaison Officer has been involved in negotiations with the applicant, which have resulted in the current scheme. He is of the opinion that the proposal is acceptable in terms of highway safety and convenience. As such the proposal is considered to comply with Policies T1 and T2 of the SOLP.

Other Material Considerations

- 6.10 The trees on the site are not protected by a tree preservation order but are protected due to their location within the Conservation Area. The trees are prominent in the street scene and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The current proposal allows for the retention of the three most prominent trees on the site, however, the Forestry Officer is of the opinion that the two lime trees are in poor condition and that it would be beneficial to replace them to provide longer term improvements to the visual and environmental quality of the site.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The application proposal is in accordance with the relevant development plan policies and national planning policy as, subject to conditions, the development would conserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of the adjacent listed buildings. In addition the proposal would respect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and would not be prejudicial to highway safety.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That planning permission be granted, subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement – 3 years**
- 2. Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans**
- 3. Samples of hard surfacing materials to be submitted and approved**
- 4. Landscaping scheme to be submitted and approved**
- 5. Parking and turning areas to be provided in accordance with the approved plans**

Author: Mr T Wyatt
Contact no: 01491 823154
Email: planning.east@southoxon.gov.uk