

APPLICATION NO.	P17/S0129/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	27.1.2017
PARISH	THAME
WARD MEMBERS	Jeannette Matelot Nigel Champken-Woods David Dodds
APPLICANT	Beechcroft Developments Ltd
SITE	67 Park Street, Thame, OX9 3HT
PROPOSAL	Conversion from one residential property into two apartments.
AMENDMENTS	Parking provision and balcony privacy screen
GRID REFERENCE	471167/205407
OFFICER	Simon Kitson

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This application is referred to planning committee as the officer’s recommendation of approval conflicts with the views of the Town Council.

1.2 The application site (identified on the map **attached** at Appendix A) is currently occupied by a detached building recently in use as an office falling within Use Class B1. The property is located within the built-up limits of Thame, on the south-western side of Park Street, adjacent to the former Thame Service Station site.

1.3 In 2015, the building was referenced within a planning approval for the redevelopment of the site. The scheme is to provide 20 retirement units. No. 67 Park Street is shown on the approved site layout plan as ‘retained to residential use (subject to separate planning application)’ This is **attached** at Appendix B

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

2.1 As detailed in the application submission, consent is sought for the conversion of the building into two residential flats, with parking provision, amenity areas and a first floor roof terrace.

2.2 A copy of the proposed plans is **attached** as Appendix C. The application is accompanied by a planning statement which can be viewed online at www.southoxon.gov.uk

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 Thame Town Council – Objection

1. Loss of employment floor space
2. Did not appear to have been advertised for commercial use

Thame Conservation Area Advisory Committee. - No strong views

- Issues raised over fenestration detail and glazing

Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council) - No objection, subject to condition

Waste Management Officer (District Council) - No strong views

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P16/S3517/NM](#) - Approved (21/11/2016)

Non material amendment - to simplify some of the building details and scheme on application ref. P15/S2782/FUL.

[P16/S0766/NM](#) - Approved (15/04/2016)

Non material amendment to remove existing unsafe chimney from retained fire station to application P15/S2782/FUL.

[P15/S2782/FUL](#) - Approved (22/12/2015)

Demolition of existing buildings (retention of the former Fire Station building) and re-development of site with two and three storey buildings to create 20 retirement units for people aged 55 and over and formation of courtyard parking and communal gardens.

[P13/S1589/FUL](#) - Approved (31/07/2013)

Demolition of existing buildings and walls, erection of new boundary wall with railings, and use of land for the display and sale of motor vehicles.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) Policies;

H5 Integrate windfall sites
WS12 Retain existing employment land
ESDQ15 Design and Access Statement
ESDQ16 Site and its surroundings
ESDQ17 Character of the town
ESDQ20 Historic context
ESDQ28 Private outdoor space
ESDQ29 Car parking

5.2 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) policies;

CSEN3 - Historic environment
CSQ3 - Design
CSS1 - The Overall Strategy
CSTHA1 - The Strategy for Thame

5.3 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP) policies;

CON7 - Proposals in a conservation area
D1 - Principles of good design
D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
E6 - Loss of employment uses
G2 - Protect district from adverse development

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG)

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main issues to be considered in the determination of this planning application are:

1. The principle of the development
2. The impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area
3. The impact on neighbouring properties
4. The impact on parking provision/highway safety
5. Provision of adequate amenity space

Principle

- 6.2 Policy WS12 of the TNP states that proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of redundant land or buildings in employment or service trade use to non-employment uses will only be permitted if the existing use is no longer economically viable and the site has been marketed at a reasonable price for at least a year. This proposal is not accompanied by any marketing information demonstrating that the lawful B1 use of the building is not economically viable. There are nonetheless other material considerations which need to be weighed in the planning balance, in accordance with Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Paragraph 2 of the NPPF.
- 6.3 The agent argues that the change of use of the office building was granted under the previous consent for the Thame Service Station redevelopment. Officers note that the building was included in the approved site plan, implying that it featured in the residential scheme. However, there is some ambiguity as the approved site plan 2629.P.101 rev: J states: 'No.67 Retained to residential use (subject to separate planning application)'. Furthermore, the development description only makes reference to the redevelopment of the site to provide 20 retirement units. There is no explicit reference to the change of use of no. 67 within the development description or the delegated report. It is mentioned in the latter, but only in terms of its retention with no material alterations.
- 6.4 Whilst the loss of employment of the Thame Service Centre and adjacent units was considered to be acceptable under the previous approvals, the Town Council raise particular objection to this aspect of the current proposal. However, whilst it is accepted that the employment use is afforded protection under WS12, officers note that this form of change of use benefits from the permitted development (PD) rights set out under more recent national legislation. For the avoidance of doubt, this is set out under Part 3, Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. The original planning permission for the change of use to B1 office did not revoke PD rights and officers are mindful that the property could therefore be converted to residential uses without the need for planning permission or any form of viability assessment.
- 6.5 Given the lack of highway objection, contaminated land or flooding issues and the location of the property within a wider housing development, officers consider that prior approval for the change of use would be highly likely to be granted should an appropriate application be submitted. On this basis, officers consider that there are sufficient material planning considerations in this instance to allow a departure from this aspect of the Development Plan. The site is otherwise in a highly sustainable location for new housing, with convenient pedestrian access to the town centre and a range of key services and facilities.

Impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area

- 6.6 There are few external alterations proposed to the existing building, with the main operational development occurring to the rear of the property where there is little or no visibility from public vantage points. Officers concur with the Thame Conservation Area Advisory Committee's views that timber fenestration detail would be preferable to the uPVC shown on the submitted plans and the mirrored glazing is inappropriate. This is an area where there are a significant number of properties which have retained traditional sliding sash style timber openings. These elements should be the subject of further consideration as a condition of consent, in order to ensure that the proposal would conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding conservation area.

Residential amenity

- 6.7 Whilst the proposed flats would be provided with very limited private amenity spaces, less than the recommended SODG standards, both this document and SOLP Policy D3 emphasise the need for a flexible approach, taking account of the surrounding context. This is consistent with the design objectives of the TNP. Many of the surrounding properties also have limited garden areas and this is a particularly walkable neighbourhood with a recreation ground and town centre in close proximity to the site.
- 6.8 It is noted that there are no objections received on the basis of neighbour impact. The proposed development would not result in a material loss of light or outlook with respect to any of the neighbouring properties. Officers do however consider that the proposed roof terrace may result in potential overlooking of the rear part of the garden area at no. 66 Park Street. Whilst the side of the terrace would be largely obscured by the flank wall of the neighbouring dwelling, the width and depth of this raised area required a more substantial form of privacy screen.
- 6.9 Following discussions with the agent, the privacy screening has been extended around the perimeter of the terrace i.e. replacing the railings with a higher, obscure glazed means of enclosure with a minimum 1.5m height. Officers are satisfied that this measure would provide adequate mitigation, allowing a reasonable outlook from the resident's private amenity area whilst also significantly obscuring views of the neighbouring garden.

Highway safety

- 6.10 Following the submission of a revised parking arrangement, the Local Highway Authority raise no objection to the proposal. Officers are satisfied that adequate parking provision is provided and that the additional vehicular movements from the main site access would not be prejudicial to highway or pedestrian safety.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This is a sustainable location for this form of development and there would not be an adverse neighbour or highway impact, subject to the attached conditions. The council is satisfied that the proposed scheme would not materially harm the character of the site, the street scene or the wider conservation area.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **To grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:**

1. **The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.**
2. **That the development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans**
3. **Prior to first occupation of the first floor flat, privacy screening to the roof terrace shall be provided in accordance with the approved plan. The screening shall be glazed in obscure glass with a minimum of level 3 obscurity and it shall be retained at a minimum height of 1.5m from floor level.**
4. **That the development hereby approved shall not commence until a detailed specification of the type, design and external finish of all windows and external doors has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**
5. **Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved, the parking and turning areas shall be provided in accordance with drawing no. MDL-1251-PL120 and shall be constructed, laid out, surfaced, drained and completed to be compliant with sustainable drainage (SuDS) principles, and shall be retained unobstructed except for the parking of vehicles associated with the development at all times.**

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