
APPLICATION NO.	P20/S4632/FUL & P20/S4633/LB
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION & LISTED BUILDING
REGISTERED	3.12.2020
PARISH	THAME
WARD MEMBERS	Pieter-Paul Barker Kate Gregory David Bretherton
APPLICANT	Mr B Hutton
SITE	20 Upper High Street, Thame, OX9 2BZ
PROPOSAL	Change of use and conversion of ground and first floor to number 20, to form a single dwelling and reinstate its historic residential use.
OFFICER	Davina Sarac

1.0 **INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL**

1.1 These applications are referred to the Planning Committee as the applications were called in by Councillor Kate Gregory. The officer's recommendation is for approval as set out below in this report.

1.2 20 Upper High Street is a two-storey grade II listed building, listed as a pair with No.19 to the left of the application site. The site is located within the centre of Thame and lies within the Thame Conservation Area, which is shown on the plan **attached** as Appendix A. The building was originally built as a residential house, and later converted to a shop on the ground floor with a dwelling at first floor level. The building is mid-18th century, with late 18th century addition to right, and 19th century alterations. The building has a rendered plinth and is constructed of red brick with flared headers in Flemish bond and has an old plain-tiled roof. The ground floor retail use has been empty for some time.

1.3 These applications seek planning permission (P20/S4632/FUL) and listed building consent (P20/S4633/LB) for the change of use and conversion of the ground and first floor to form a single dwelling and reinstate its historic residential use. In order to facilitate this the building will be altered slightly internally to provide a new living/kitchen/dining space with a toilet on the ground floor and two bedrooms on the first floor. The new staircase is positioned where it is believed an historic one previously existed. All historic listed features are to be retained with minimal need for demolition.

1.4 A copy of the plans associated with the applications are **attached** as Appendix B, whilst other documentation associated with the applications can be viewed on the council's website, www.southoxon.gov.uk

2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

2.1 **Thame Town Council** – Objects on the following grounds:

- The proposal is contrary to TNP Policy WS2 in proposing residential use within an A1 unit with a long history of continuous use
- The overall internal space within the proposed dwelling is inadequate, at only 70% of the minimum size for a 2-bed, 4-person dwelling.
- Harm to existing residential use on the upper floor of 18 – 20 Upper High Street, contrary to TNP Policy WS9

- 2.2 **Highway Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council)** - No objection subject to recommended highway informative.
- 2.3 **Thame Conservation Area Advisory Committee** - It is pleasing to see this building restored to living accommodation retaining many of the original features.
- 2.4 **Conservation Officer (South and Vale)** - No objection to this application.
- 2.5 **Neighbour representations** – One letter received in support of the proposed plans stating:
- The proposal will enhance the area and bring a seemingly unloved and frankly almost derelict building back to life. It will also help to introduce new residents to the Upper High Street area of town.
- 3.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**
- 3.1 [P20/S4675/LB](#) – Approved (19/02/2021)
Change of use of rear outbuilding, with extension to rear and first floor to form a 1 bed dwelling.
- [P20/S4673/FUL](#) – Approved (19/02/2021)
Change of use of rear outbuilding, with extension to rear and first floor to form a 1 bed dwelling.
- [P19/S0034/HH](#) - Approved (02/05/2019)
Demolish existing rear extension and erect new two storey rear extension and single storey rear extension.
- [P93/N0326/LB](#) - Approved (30/07/1993)
Internal alterations: Adjoining of two shop premises by opening part of party wall.
- [P49/M0556](#) - Approved (11/10/1949)
MINOR ALTERATIONS INCLUDING REBUILDING OF LARDER
- 4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**
- 4.1 Not Applicable
- 5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**
- 5.1 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- 5.2 **Development Plan Policies**
South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) Policies:
DES1 - Delivering High Quality Development
DES2 - Enhancing Local Character
DES3 - Design and Access Statements
DES5 - Outdoor Amenity Space
DES6 - Residential Amenity
DES8 - Promoting Sustainable Design
ENV6 - Historic Environment
ENV7 - Listed Buildings
ENV8 - Conservation Areas
H1 - Delivering New Homes
H3 - Housing in the Towns of Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford
STRAT1 - The Overall Strategy
TH1 - The strategy for Thame

5.3 Thame Neighbourhood Plan 2013 (TNP) Policies:

ESDQ15 - Developers must demonstrate in a Design and Access Statement how their proposed development reinforces Thame's character

ESDQ16 - Development must relate well to its site and its surroundings

ESDQ17 - Development must make a positive contribution towards the distinctive character of the town as a whole

ESDQ18 - New development must contribute to local character by creating a sense of place appropriate to its location

ESDQ19 - The Design and Access Statement and accompanying drawings must provide sufficient detail for proposals to be properly understood

ESDQ20 - Building style must be appropriate to the historic context.

ESDQ28 - Provide good quality private outdoor space

H6 - Design new development to be of high quality

H9 – Provide a mix of housing types

WS2 – Retain and enhance primary and secondary retail frontages

WS8 - Encourage a diverse range of uses in the town centre by supporting new residential use on upper floors

WS9 - Encourage a diverse range of uses in the town centre by avoiding loss of residential uses

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016)

5.5 Other Relevant Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this planning application, the Council has regard to its equalities obligations including its obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The relevant planning considerations are the following:

- **The principle of change of use;**
- **Whether the proposal would conserve or enhance the significance of the heritage asset, respect any features of special architectural or historic interest and be sympathetic to the listed building and its impact upon the conservation area.**
- **Size of the dwelling**
- **Residential amenity;**
- **Access and Parking;**
- **Other material planning considerations**

6.2 The Principle of Change of Use

Policy H1 of the SOLP states that residential development will be permitted at sites allocated or carried forward by this Plan and on sites that are allocated by Neighbourhood Development Plans.

6.3 Policy TH1 sets out the strategy for Thame, and the Council will support development proposals that deliver homes in accordance with Policy H3 which puts the emphasis on neighbourhood plan policies.

- 6.4 Policy H4 of the TNP sets out the main criteria for housing development within Thame. Policy H9 seeks to provide a mix of housing types and there is a shortage of smaller homes (3 bedrooms and fewer) in Thame.
- 6.5 Policy ENV7 of the SOLP states that changes of use will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the new use can be accommodated without any adverse effect on the significance of the building and its setting.
- 6.6 Policy WS2 of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) relates to the retention and enhancement of primary and secondary retail frontages. The policy restricts changes of use of shops (Class A1) to non-retail uses within the primary retail frontage but is silent in relation to change of use of retail uses within secondary retail frontages, although it does state that within secondary retail frontages, change of use from residential and/or employment to uses within A1-A5 will be supported provided that the proposed use is compatible with nearby residential properties. The vitality of the town centre is dependent on primary retail frontages and so it is important that the retail frontages be retained and enhanced.
- 6.7 The ground floor retail unit has been vacant for some time now. It is not within the primary retail frontage but sits within the secondary retail frontage and sits directly next to a residential dwelling at 21 Upper High Street. Officers have given weight to the historic original use of the building which was a residential dwelling before it was converted into a retail use on the ground floor. There is also a current need for smaller dwellings within Thame, a two bedroom dwelling would help increase the number of smaller dwellings available in the area. Being located in the centre of the town, which is a highly sustainable location, officers consider the principle of change of use and conversion of the ground floor to a residential use here is acceptable and would provide a welcome smaller dwelling within the town. The application has been assessed by the Council's Conservation Officer who has raised no objection to the principle of changing the use to residential and is supportive of the proposal.
- 6.8 **Whether the proposal would conserve or enhance the significance of the heritage asset, respect any features of special architectural or historic interest and be sympathetic to the listed building and its impact upon the conservation area**
No external changes are proposed, and internally the alterations would be minimal. A stud wall will be erected in the back room to create a downstairs bathroom with new stairs erected in the middle of the building coming out of the front room. The opening in the single storey part of the dwelling will be infilled as this was the opening into the outbuilding which has recently been granted permission to become a separate dwelling. At first floor level the existing opening into 19 Upper High Street will be infilled and the wall reinstated. A new stud wall will be inserted in the front bedroom to separate the stairs coming up into that room.
- 6.9 The Council's Conservation Officer has assessed the proposal and concluded that the closing up of the connections to No.19 and the outbuilding will not harm the legibility of the original cellular floor plan of the main listed building. Details of the materials used to close the partition and add acoustic and fire separation in accordance with building regulations were submitted during the application following a request by the Conservation Officer, who was satisfied that those details would not significantly impact the remaining primary fabric. Overall, the works to the internal alterations will not substantially alter any historic fabric of high significance. Consequently, Officers consider that the proposal would conserve the architectural and historic significance of this group of listed buildings (Nos.19 to 20 Upper High Street), and would not diminish the contribution the buildings make to the Thame Conservation Area in accordance with

the tests of the Planning (LB&CA) Act 1990 Sections 66 and 72, NPPF paragraph 200 and SOLP policies ENV6, ENV7 and ENV8.

6.10 Size of the dwelling

The nationally described space standard deals with internal space within new dwellings and is suitable for application across all tenures. It sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height. Thame Town Council have objected on the grounds the dwelling would have inadequate overall internal space and that it would only amount to 70% of the minimum size for a two-bed, four-person dwelling.

- 6.11 A two bedroom dwelling does not necessarily mean that there will be four people living in that dwelling. It is more likely that less than four people will occupy this dwelling. The standard for three people in a two bedroomed dwelling is 70 sq m of gross internal floor area. The dwelling would have 59 sq m of gross internal floor area. The nationally described space standard only deals with new dwellings whereas this a conversion of a historic mid-18th century listed building with smaller rooms than a modern new house. Officers' consider that this conversion of a listed building is a good use of an existing historic building bringing it back to its original intended use and therefore the size of the dwelling is acceptable in this instance.

Residential amenity

- 6.12 Policy DES6 of the SOLP 2035 states that development proposals should demonstrate that they will not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses, when considering both individual and cumulative impacts, in relation to the following factors:

- i) loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight;
- ii) dominance or visual intrusion;
- iii) noise or vibration;
- iv) smell, dust, heat, odour, gases or other emissions;
- v) pollution, contamination or the use of / or storage of hazardous substances; and
- vi) external lighting.

- 6.13 The occupier at no. 21 Upper High Street is supportive of the application. The applicant also owns no. 19 Upper Street High. Officers consider that the internal works at no. 20 Upper High Street required to convert the building would not substantially harm the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties.

6.14 Access and Parking

No parking is proposed with the dwelling which I consider acceptable in this highly sustainable location in as much that it is a central location and served by public transport. There are parking restrictions within the vicinity to prevent indiscriminate parking. The proposal is unlikely to result in any significant intensification of transport activity at the property. The proposal is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the highway network. The proposed dwelling would have shared rear amenity space to the rear of 18, 19 and 20 Upper High Street and cycle storage is provided in a small outbuilding to the rear of number 18 Upper High Street.

6.15 Other material planning considerations

Policy DES8 seeks to ensure that all new development minimises the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction and should be designed to improve resilience to the anticipated effects of climate change. This is a conversion of an old building where there are existing limitations given its listed status and therefore there would be limited scope in this case to minimise carbon and energy impacts other than

through those which can be achieved through current Building Regulations that seek to minimise carbon and seek energy efficiency and having low energy light-fittings throughout the property to further reduce electricity demand.

6.16 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

CIL is liable in this instance but as the proposed dwelling does not create any additional floor area there is zero liability.

6.17 Pre-commencement conditions

None of the recommended conditions require the submission of additional information prior to the commencement of the development.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The proposal is considered to comply with the relevant Development Plan Policies and, subject to the recommended conditions, would not be harmful to the special historical or architectural qualities of the listed building. The development would also not have a detrimental impact upon the Thame Conversation Area, would not be unneighbourly or result in any highway safety issues.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 **That planning permission P20/S4632/FUL be granted subject to the following conditions:**

- 1: Commencement of development within three years**
- 2: Development in accordance with the approved plans**
- 3: Development in accordance with relevant works, of upgrading to the partition wall**
- 4: Mud and vehicle obstructions on the Highway informative**

8.2 **That listed building consent for P20/S4633/LB be granted subject to the following conditions:**

- 1: Commencement of works within 3 years**
- 2: Works to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans**
- 3: Development in accordance with relevant works, of upgrading to the partition wall**

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