

APPLICATION NO.	P15/S3226/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	2.10.2015
PARISH	WALLINGFORD
WARD MEMBER(S)	Imran Lokhon Elaine Hornsby
APPLICANT	Mathematical Market Research
SITE	Wallingford House, 46 High Street, Wallingford, OX10 0DB
PROPOSAL	Change of use of Wallingford House from Class B1 (a) offices to Class C3 (dwelling house) residential to provide six two bedroom flats.(as amplified by the submission of a Transport Statement prepared by Glanville Consultants which was received on 5 November, 2015 addressing concerns raised by the County Highway Authority).
AMENDMENTS	Location, Block \plan and proposed site plan ref BS 317 090 PO received 6 January, 2016
GRID REFERENCE	460522/189455
OFFICER	Kim Gould

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The site is located within Wallingford town centre adjacent to Kinecroft which is a Schedule Ancient Monument. The building is not listed but is within the conservation area. Wallingford House has three storeys constructed in solid masonry with a painted render finish and slate tile covered roof. It has a Georgian frontage facing High Street and was built as a residence in 1872 until its change of use to offices in 1972. An OS extract is **attached** as Appendix 1.

1.2 Wallingford House is currently used as offices which are now surplus to the applicant's requirements. There is off street parking to the front of the building.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

2.1 This planning application seeks full planning permission to change the use of Wallingford House from Class B1 (a) offices to its original use - Class C3 residential. Works will include minor demolition and alterations to the interior of the property including three new windows to the west façade.

2.2 The proposal will result in the creation of 6 no 2 bed flats with an allocated off street parking space per flat plus one for visitors. A copy of some of the plans accompanying the application are **attached** as Appendix 2. A full copy of the application with the plans and supporting statement can be viewed on the council's website on www.southandvale.gov.uk

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 Wallingford Town Council – Object

- Loss of prime commercial office space in Wallingford town centre
- No need for this type of apartment type accommodation in the town centre
- Additional windows and a door would destroy the classical balance and therefore have a significant negative visual impact on the Kinecroft.

A full copy of the Town Council's comments are **attached** as Appendix 3

County Archaeological Services (SODC) - No strong views

Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council) – Objection to original scheme. Following submission of a transport statement No objection subject to conditions relating to parking, access and bicycle parking.

Housing – A commuted sum towards affordable housing is requested rather than on site provision as a registered provider is unlikely to take these units.

Conservation Officer - No objection to the principle of conversion subject to conditions relating to boundary treatments, details of bin store/bike sheds, joinery details of windows, doors and flues, vents etc.

Neighbour Object (3) Insufficient car parking which will lead to residents parking on parking spaces allocated to Masonic Centre. Land to the right of the building provides access to the centre and is a legal vehicle route which will be blocked off by cars parked in the front and the installation of bike stores and scrubs. Allocating 7 spaces for 12 bedrooms seems completely unworkable.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P72/B0198](#) - Approved (12/12/1972)

CHANGE OF USE AS OFFICES AND ERECTION OF A THIRD STOREY FOR USE AS OFFICES

[P71/B0076](#) - Refused (18/08/1971)

Demolition of Brewery House and erection of shops with flats over

[P71/B0075](#) - Refused (18/08/1971)

Change to permanent use as a shop with flats over

[P70/B0123](#) - Approved (08/01/1971)

Alterations to form an hotel

[P69/B0079](#) - Approved (26/11/1969)

Change of use of Brewery House to use as a boarding house

[P69/B0103](#) - Refused (10/11/1969)

Proposed use of Brewery House as an antique shop

[P69/B0080](#) - Refused (07/10/1969)

Demolition of Brewery House and use of site for residential purposes

[P69/B0078](#) - Approved (07/10/1969)

Change of use to use as a social club with domestic accommodation

[P69/B0053](#) - Refused (24/06/1969)

Removal of porch building in of double doors and fitting security bars to windows

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy policies

CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSEN3 - Historic environment

CSH1 - Amount and distribution of housing

CSH4 - Meeting housing needs

CSWAL1 - The Strategy for Wallingford

CSH3 - Affordable housing

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 policies;

- CON7 - Proposals in a conservation area
- D10 - Waste Management
- D3 - Outdoor amenity area
- D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers
- T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users
- E6 - Loss of employment uses
- H4 - Housing sites in towns and larger villages outside Green Belt

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

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

- i. Whether the principle of converting the building to residential is acceptable
- ii. Whether there is a viable permitted development fall-back position
- iii. Policy H4 criteria (including impact on the conservation area)
- iv. Housing mix
- v. Affordable housing
- vi. Parking
- vii. Loss of office space in Wallingford town centre

6.2 **Principle**

Class O of Schedule 2, Part 3, of the General Permitted Development Order (England) Order 2015, (GPDO) allows for the conversion of offices in B1 use to residential use without requiring planning permission subject a number of criteria. The relevant part of the GPDO is **attached** as Appendix 4. Criterion (b) requires the change of use to have taken place prior to 29 May, 2016. The applicant is not certain that the associated works and the change of use will have taken place by 29 May, 2016. For this reason only, this planning application has been submitted.

The Government announced in October 2015 that is was their intention to remove this criterion to make the change of use permanent. I am advised that this is likely to take place in March, 2016.

The significance of this is that when assessing this planning application it is important to appreciate that there is a viable permitted development position. (i.e. the conversion could currently go ahead without planning permission.)

6.3 Central government advice contained in the NPPF (2012) states that “development which is sustainable should go ahead, without delay, a presumption in favour of sustainable development that is the basis for every plan and every decision.” It goes on to advise that Local Planning Authorities “should normally approve planning applications for change to residential uses from commercial buildings currently in the B use classes where there is an identified need for additional housing in that area providing there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate.” The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions and it was published after the adoption of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and therefore carried more weight. The council’s housing team have advised that there is a high

demand for small residential units in this sustainable location and the council's economic development team have confirmed that they have no objection to the loss of office accommodation.

6.4 The site lies within Wallingford town centre, outside the primary shopping frontage. The proposal would change the use of existing premises from B1 to residential. Policy E6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011) allows for the change of use of buildings in employment use to non-employment use in towns if the site is either less than 0.25 ha in size and the buildings are under 500sqm or 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. In this case, the site area is approximately 0.05 hectares and the floor area is some 691sqm. As such the need to market the property is required by this policy. No such information has been submitted with this application. However, it is essential to take into account Government advice within the NPPF which requires Local Planning Authorities to approve development which is sustainable and consider that this change of use can be carried out under permitted development. For this reason, it would be unreasonable to delay the determination of this planning application for the lack of marketing information.

6.5 **Policy H4 criteria**

Policy H4 of the SOLP allows for housing on sites within the built-up areas of Wallingford providing a number of criteria. The ones which are most relevant to this case are:

- that the development is in keeping with its surroundings;
- the character of the area is not adversely affected; and
- there are no amenity, environmental or highway objections.

The building exists and is an attractive feature within the Wallingford conservation area. The property was built originally for residential use so is in keeping with the surroundings. The only external alterations to the building are the insertion of 4 additional windows in the west elevation. Subject to the detail of these new windows being approved by condition, there is no objection to these additional windows and it is your officers' view that the proposed change of use would not adversely affect the character of the area. In its revised form, the County Highway Authority has no objection to the proposed change of use and the parking associated with it. Although there is no amenity space included in this proposal, the site lies adjacent to Kinecroft which is an open area of land which is a Schedule Ancient Monument and is available to the public for recreational use. It is not unusual for flats in the town centre to not include private amenity space. The additional windows would not adversely affect the amenity of any adjoining premises. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with policy H4.

6.6 **Housing mix**

Policy CSH4 of the SOCS seeks to ensure that on all new residential developments a mix of dwelling types and sizes is provided. In this case, 6 no 2 bed dwellings are proposed so a mix of dwelling types is not provided. However, the permitted development fall-back position where no such mix would be required must be taken into account. Also, the council's housing team have confirmed that there is a demand for 2 bed units within Wallingford town centre. For these reasons a mix of dwelling types has not been sought.

6.7 **Affordable housing**

Policy CSH 3 of the SOCS seeks 40% affordable housing on all sites where there is a net gain of three or more dwellings subject to the viability provision on each site. No affordable housing has been submitted with this scheme. Again, the permitted development fall-back position is a material planning consideration and affordable

housing would not be required if the work was conducted under permitted development. As such, your offices consider that to insist on affordable housing would be unreasonable in this case.

6.8 Parking

The proposal includes a single off street parking space for each flat and an additional one for use by visitors. No objection to this arrangement has been raised by the County Highway Authority following the submission of a Transport Statement subject to a number of conditions which have been recommended below. The lack of parking is a concern of both the Town Council and local residents. However, the parking provision meets the council's standards for 2 bed dwellings and there is no technical reason to refuse this application on highway grounds.

6.9 One of the objections from a local resident is that an access to the west of the building also currently gives access to a parking area used by the adjoining Masonic Centre. The proposal would prevent the centre from using this right of way. Whilst this is unfortunate, the existence of a right of way is a consideration but not one which should be accorded a significant amount of weight.

6.10 Loss of office accommodation in Wallingford Town Centre

The conversion of this building which is currently in office use will result in a reduction of office accommodation within the town centre. However, the council's economic development team have confirmed that there is currently very little demand for office space in Wallingford and that a 2624sq ft. office building close to Wallingford House which also an old is building has been available for 3 years. As such they have not raised an objection to this proposal on the grounds of loss of office accommodation and the application is in accordance with Government advice within the NPPF which advises that such changes of use should take place providing there are no economic reason why such development would be inappropriate.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Schedule 2, Part 3, Class O of the General Permitted Order allows for the conversion of offices to residential use. The only reason this application has been submitted is because the applicant is not convinced that the works can be carried out before 30th May 2016 which is currently one of the criterion within Class O. However, the Government has advised that this change of use is to be made permanent within the next few months. The principle of the change of use is in accordance with Government advice. A mix of housing, and affordable housing units have not been sought as there is no such requirement to provide these under permitted development. Likewise, the need to carry out marketing which is set out in policy E6 of the SOLP is not considered necessary. It would be unreasonable to insist on this as it is likely to result in delays to the scheme and vacant accommodation in the town centre which would not be in the spirit of advice within the NPPF. The proposal would create 6 small units of accommodation in a very sustainable location close to the town centre, employment areas and public transport. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **That planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement three years - full planning permission.**
2. **Approved plans.**
3. **External ducts and flues (details required).**
4. **Joinery details.**
5. **Landscaping.**
6. **New vehicular access.**
7. **Turning areas and car parking.**
8. **Cycle parking facilities.**

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