

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Planning Committee



held on Wednesday, 19 April 2023 at
6.00 pm in Meeting Room 1, Abbey
House, Abbey Close, Abingdon,
OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: Peter Dragonetti (Vice-Chair – in the chair), Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Victoria Haval, Lorraine Hillier, Axel Macdonald, Ian Snowdon, and Alan Thompson
Officers: Darius Zarazel (Democratic Services Officer), Paula Fox (Planning Manager), Andy Heron (Planning Officer), Simon Kitson (Planning Officer)

Remote attendance:

Officers: Susie Royce (Broadcasting Officer)

11 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

12 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ken Arlett, David Bretherton, Tim Bearder, and Elizabeth Gillespie.

13 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign these as such.

14 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15 Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

16 Proposals for site visits

There were no proposals for site visits.

17 Public participation

The list showing members of the public who had registered to speak was tabled at the meeting.

18 P22/S3609/FUL - Horse & Harrow, Main Street, West Hagbourne, OX11 0NB

The committee considered planning application P22/S3609/FUL for the change of use of existing public house (Sui Generis) to provide a three-bed dwelling and a four-bed dwelling (Use C3), erection of a three-bed and two four-bed dwellings (Use C3) on land adjacent to the public house accessed from Main Street, with associated parking and landscaping, along with the demolition of existing outbuilding (amended plans received 1 and 8 December 2022 to rectify discrepancy on existing elevation plans, amended boundary treatment, revised energy statement, revised site plan to include air source heat pumps and biodiversity metric and amended red line plan to reduce site area received 8 February 2023. Further amended plans also received on 15 February 2023 to include amended visibility splays, turning area, car parking, amendment to the roof of plot 1, amendment to the finish of the dwellings to render, and the setting back of plot 5), on land at Horse & Harrow, Main Street, West Hagbourne.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that the application was brought to the committee at the request of the Development Manager, due to a council staff member living in the first-floor apartment of the pub, and following an objection from West Hagbourne Parish Council. The planning officer informed the committee that the parish council's concerns centred around the lack of consultation between the developer and the village and that, as this was the last pub and public building in the village, if the application was granted there would be a lack of public meeting spaces.

The planning officer noted that the site itself was situated on the western edge of West Hagbourne with several houses built nearby to the east and with several other houses being built to the west. Due to these developments, the planning officer considered the application to be an infill development.

The planning officer also highlighted to members that the parcel of land to the west side of the site was in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty whilst the pub itself sat within the West Hagbourne Conservation Area. However, as the proposed dwellings in the application were designed with some pitched and some hipped roofs and finished with white render, the planning officer believed that they would be in character with the surrounding buildings and sympathetic to the area.

Finally, the planning officer informed members that the council had instructed an independent viability assessment and that the assessor believed that the pub would be unlikely to be viable in the future.

Overall, based on the viability assessment reports and the lack of objections received from technical consultees, the planning officer recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

Councillor Michael Butler spoke on behalf of West Hagbourne Parish Council, objecting to the application.

David Cooper spoke objecting to the application.

Christian Roberts, representing the applicant, and Jeremy Heppell, the agent, spoke in support of the application.

The committee asked the planning officer about a nearby pub, the Red Lion in Blewbury, and the reasons why this was not included or referred to in the independent viability assessment report, but the planning officer could not confirm the reasons for this.

Members then asked about the weight provided to the motion passed by the full council of South Oxfordshire District Council, on 25 March 2021, that the council would use all its available powers to ensure pubs continue to be able to provide for the local community, in accordance with Local Plan Policy CF1. In response, the planning officer informed members that, in a situation where a pub met the criteria in that policy, the council would look to retain the pub but indicated that the viability assessment did not show that. However, members felt strongly that the pub did meet the criteria in Policy CF1 as it was essential to the community, being their only public meeting place, and also that the pub could be economically viable in the future with proper investment, and also that the viability assessment had key omissions that were very relevant. The members also believed that the reason only ten objections were received to the application was due to the historic lack of investment in the pub.

The committee then asked about why the pub had not been advertised for sale as was required in other policies relating to employment spaces before they were permitted to be sold off. The planning officer and development manager clarified that those policies requiring a marketing exercise would not apply in this case due to the requirements in Policy CF1. Members also raised concerns that the pub had not been put up for sale or advertised and that this would also likely affect the outlook in the viability assessment.

A question was also raised about the overflow car park to the west of the site as members believed that the area was currently not suitable for vehicle parking and that it was also not advertised as such a space. In response, the planning officer indicated that a condition applied to the 2018 application for the turning of parking spaces in the east into several detached dwellings was that this area be used as overflow parking. However, members maintained concerned as there were no indications it was used for car parking as it was left to be an overgrown grassland.

Overall, members believed that pub met two criteria in Local Plan Policy CF1; firstly, that the pub could be viable given appropriate investment and advertising, something that the pub had been lacking, and that there were key omissions in the viability assessment report; and secondly that it was a needed community facility as it was the

only public meeting space in the whole village, and a non-designated heritage asset. In addition, members emphasised the requirement from the full council motion on 25 March 2021 to support and protect such facilities if they meet Policy CF1. Therefore, as the committee agreed that the pub was a needed community facility that could be economically viable, they agreed that the application should be refused.

A motion, moved and seconded, to refuse the application was carried on being put to the vote.

RESOLVED: to refuse planning application P22/S3609/FUL for the following reasons:

1. The Horse and Harrow public house is considered to be essential to the village, being the only community facility in West Hagbourne and one which fosters the engagement and involvement of the local community, as well as providing jobs for local people and local suppliers. Although viability assessments have been produced, they have omitted key considerations, such as other nearby public houses, and there have been no attempts to market the premises. The Horse and Harrow has suffered from an historic lack of investment which, in turn, has deterred people from visiting the premises. With investment the public house could be economically viable in the future.

As such the proposed change of use of the public house would be contrary to policy CF1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 which seeks to safeguard existing community facilities and paragraphs 84 (d) and 93 (c) and (d) of the NPPF.

19 P23/S0268/FUL and P23/S0269/LB - 23 Reading Road, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1AB

The committee considered planning application P23/S0268/FUL and listed building consent application P23/S0269/LB for the change of use of the ground floor from retail to retail and residential, on land at 23 Reading Road, Henley-on-Thames.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that the application was called into the committee by a local ward member and due to the objection of Henley Town Council.

The planning officer informed the committee that the application and listed building consent application were for the conversion of the rear of 23 Reading Road into a one bed dwelling whilst retaining the front portion of the building for commercial use, and that the site itself was in the built up area of Henley and in the Henley Conservation Area.

The planning officer also spoke to the committee about the site's history, noting the 2009 granting of permission for an extension to the rear of the property that was never carried out, and that the current application was similar to that 2009 granted

application including a partition in the building to separate the retail at the front of the building from the dwelling at the back.

The planning officer also highlighted to members that the Economic Development team supported the proposal as they believed the smaller unit would be more viable, provided that the shopfront and basement would be retained. Also, even though no parking was proposed for the scheme, Oxfordshire County Council Highways had no objection due to the site's sustainable town centre location and ease of access to key services and facilities.

The planning officer also noted that there were no changes proposed to the front of the property and external alterations were considered to be minor resulting in the conservation officer also having no objection.

Overall, as the site would retain valid commercial use whilst providing an acceptable one-bedroom accommodation, and as there were no objections from technical consultees, the planning officer recommended that the application be approved subject to conditions.

Gavin Jackson, the agent representing the applicant, spoke in support of the application.

The committee asked about the planned arrangement for the collection of waste bins from the residential property and the planning officer informed members that the occupier could share the bin storage in the courtyard garden, but that there were legal questions for the landlord to answer about their access to that. However, if this was not possible, the officer confirmed that they would use the same method as the current two flats above the property for a fortnightly sack collection. The planning officer also informed the committee that the retail waste would continue to be collected as per their current arrangement and that they did not believe that waste collection would be a reason for refusing the applications.

Members inquired into the permitted development rights of the building and if there was potential for works if the applications were refused but the planning officer confirmed that there were restrictions on these rights that would apply due to the site being a listed building.

Finally, when asked about the gate at the rear of the property, the planning officer noted that the gate was the reason behind the local objections but that it had been there for four years and was beyond planning enforcement action.

Overall, members were happy that the application not only retained viable business space but that the scheme also provided an affordable housing development in a car free, sustainable location. Therefore, they agreed that the application should be approved, subject to conditions.

Motions, moved and seconded, to approve the planning application and the listed building consent application were carried on being put to the vote.

RESOLVED: to approve planning application P23/S0268/FUL, subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement of development within 3 years
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans
3. Materials to be used as shown on the approved plans

RESOLVED: to approve listed building consent application P23/S0269/LB, 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. Materials to be used as shown on the approved plans

The meeting closed at 7.27 pm
