

Councillor Pattison, Benson PC

In 2005 & 2007 there were similar applications for this site. The current application differs by wishing to demolish the existing buildings & construct a new building, whereas the previous applications were to convert the existing buildings.

The earlier applications were both refused permission for the following reasons:-

1. That the development proposed would constitute a cramped form of development resulting in unsatisfactory standards of environment and residential amenity for occupiers of the proposed dwelling house contrary to policy H11 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and policies D3 and D4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 Second Deposit Draft September 2003.
2. The existing buildings are low key unattractive buildings which have limited impact on the Conservation area and street scene in general. The physical works proposed for the conversion to residential, including the proposed link, the insertion of windows and roof lights and a turning area for vehicles, will have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area contrary to Policy CON7 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

The applicant for the second of the earlier applications appealed against the refusal, with the appeal being dismissed, the inspector agreed with the planning officer's view.

If the site was too cramped previously, how has the current planning officer perceived this not to be so?

If the conversion of the existing buildings, with the associated alteration, for residential use, was considered as detrimental to the conservation area in 2007, how can a new building, with an unconventional curved roof, plus all of the previously rejected external additional construction, to accommodate vehicular access & turning, plus domestic amenities, be less impactful on the conservation area?

Benson is already in the process of major expansion, with an increase of 80%, over the original housing stock. This proposal is not required as a necessary addition to available housing.

The site is situated adjacent to the busiest road junction in the village. Currently there are little to no vehicles accessing the site. Even when its former use as a telephone exchange was current, the vehicle movements were minimal. The change of use to residential would increase the vehicle movements exponentially, at a hazardous road junction.

It is difficult to understand how the current planning officer can contradict two former colleagues & a government appointed member of the Planning Inspectorate, by suggesting that this site is suitable for a dwelling.

The site has not grown. The road has become busier. The conservation area has not gone away & an additional dwelling is not necessary. Therefore Benson Parish Council continues to oppose this application & would urge the Planning Committee to support this objection.

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