
APPLICATION NO.	11/01758/FUL and 11/01759/CON
APPLICATION TYPE	Minor and Other
REGISTERED	22 August 2011
PARISH	Wantage
WARD MEMBER(S)	John Morgan, Charlotte Dickson and Fiona Roper
APPLICANT	Vanderbilt Homes
SITE	21 – 23 Wallingford Street, Wantage
PROPOSAL	Demolition of 21 – 23 Wallingford Street, and replacement with similar building containing two shops and two flats. (Amendment to applications ref: 10/01284/FUL and 10/01366/CON).
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	439958 187915
OFFICER	Laura Hudson

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located on the corner of Wallingford Street and Little Lane, adjacent to Waitrose in Wantage town centre.
- 1.2 The existing properties are semi-detached with two shop units on the ground floor and two flats above. Planning permission was granted in November 2010 under delegated authority to extend to the rear of the existing building to provide five additional retail units on the ground floor fronting Little Lane with 12 flats above. That scheme included the refurbishment of 21 – 23 Wallingford Street rather than their redevelopment.
- 1.3 The site is located in the Wantage Conservation Area.
- 1.4 The applications come to committee as Wantage Town Council objects.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The current applications seek conservation area consent for the demolition of nos 21 – 23 Wallingford Street and planning permission for their replacement with a new building largely the same in terms of its form and detail but slightly higher in order to meet modern building regulations. The proposed replacement building would retain two retail units on the ground floor and two maisonette flats on the first and second floors which link into the previously permitted larger scheme to the rear containing a further 12 flats.
- 2.2 This is an amendment to the previously permitted scheme and relates only to the two units fronting Wallingford Street. The rest of the development remains as previously permitted.
- 2.3 The applications have been accompanied by structural reports and an historic buildings assessment.
- 2.4 The site plan and extracts from the application drawings are **attached** at appendix 1.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 Wantage Town Council – “The Council strongly objects to the application and requests the applicant complies with the original application and that the original façade is retained.”

3.2 Ed Vaizey MP (Wantage and Didcot) – “These are the only two survivors of a row of timber framed shops that were demolished in 1972 in order for Waitrose to be built. Vanderbilt have gone back on their word and now wish to demolish these two buildings and not renovate them. I very much hope that the Planning Committee will seriously re-consider the future of the two shops which are part of our heritage, and hopefully the front of the shops will be restored and renovated.”

3.3 County Engineer – No objections.

3.4 Conservation Officer – No objections – full comments **attached** at appendix 2.

3.5 County Archaeologist – No objections subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological investigation prior to commencement of development.

3.6 30 Letters of objection have been received from local residents raising the following concerns:

- The proposal would harm the character of the street.
- The developer should be made to renovate the properties as previously permitted.
- The buildings form part of Wantage’s historic heritage and should be retained.
- These timber framed buildings cannot be replaced.
- The new proposal raises the roof line of the building which will overpower the buildings opposite and harm the street scene.
- Though the replacements are similar, the authenticity of the historic fabric cannot be replicated.
- The eastern approach to Wantage town centre was severely damaged when Waitrose replaced a group of shops. However the town needed a supermarket at that time. It does not need these two extra apartments.
- The proposal fails to justify why the demolition would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- The application provides no details of proposed materials.
- The facades of the buildings should be retained at least.

3.7 One letter of support has been received stating that the proposed frontage would enhance Wallingford Street and would be an asset to the town.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 Planning permission and conservation area consent were granted in November 2010 for the demolition of part of 21 – 23 Wallingford Street including the single storey elements and a garage building to the rear, the refurbishment of the remaining retail units and two flats above, and an extension to the rear providing five additional retail units fronting Little Lane and 12 flats above. The scheme includes car parking to the rear of the site. Extracts from the application drawings are **attached** at appendix 3.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Policy HE1 refers to development in conservation areas stating that it should preserve or enhance the character of the area.

- 5.2 Policy HE2 refers to the demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas and states that if the building contributes positively to the historic interest, character or appearance of the conservation area demolition will only be allowed if the building is beyond repair and proposals for redevelopment of the site have been prepared which outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.
- 5.3 Policies DC1 and DC5 refer to the design of new development and parking and access considerations.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 As the scheme proposes to replace the existing retail units and existing flats there would be no loss of retail use or accommodation in this town centre location. The main issues to consider, therefore, are; i) whether the proposed demolition of the building, rather than its refurbishment, is justified; and ii) the design of the replacement building and its impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.2 Policy HE2 of the local plan requires justification for the demolition of any unlisted building which contributes to the character of the conservation area. A structural survey carried out by Glanville and a Historic Buildings Assessment carried out by John Moore Heritage Services have been submitted as part of these applications. Extracts from these reports, including the conclusions, are **attached** at appendix 4. The reports conclude that whilst there is evidence of the historic nature of the building, the number of changes carried out over the years has eroded its historical significance and its structural integrity. In addition, the amount of alterations that can be carried out without consent and the extent of demolition works already permitted under the previous scheme need to be recognised.
- 6.3 As a result, the council's conservation officer has confirmed that refusing conservation area consent in this case could not be justified (see comments at appendix 2).
- 6.4 Discussions have taken place with the applicants about whether the existing façade of the building could be retained with a new structure built behind. However, whilst this has been achieved elsewhere in the town, it is not feasible in this case due to the fact that a new building behind would be subject to modern building regulations requiring higher ceiling levels, therefore the existing window heights of the building would be off-set in relation to the resulting internal arrangement. The previously permitted refurbishment would not have had to meet these requirements.
- 6.5 The proposed replacement building would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area as required by policy HE1, subject to appropriate materials and detailing, which can be required by condition. Although the proposed building has a ridge height approximately 1.4 metres higher than that of the existing building, due to building regulation requirements, this is not considered to be harmful and the overall form and fenestration will match the existing building. The proposal, therefore, will retain the existing character of the street scene.
- 6.6 The building is located far enough away from any neighbouring properties to ensure that its increased height will not have a harmful impact on any neighbours' residential amenity and the varied street scene in the vicinity would ensure that the new buildings would not look out of keeping given the height of Waitrose adjacent to the site.
- 6.7 Conditions are recommended in relation to windows, doors, shop fronts, eaves and chimneys.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Given the alterations that have been carried out to the building over the years, including changes to the historic features, and the current structural condition of the building, it is considered that refusal of conservation area consent for the demolition of the building could not be justified. The replacement building is similar in scale and detail, and with appropriate materials and detailing it would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. TL1 – Time Limit**
- 2. MC2 – Material Samples**
- 3. MC9 – Building details (windows, window sills and lintels, external doors and rainwater goods, treatment of all verges and eaves of new building)**
- 4. CN8 – Submission of details (new shop fronts)**
- 5. CN8 – Submission of details (chimneys)**
- 6. No development shall commence on site until the applicant has secured a staged programme of archaeological investigation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**
- 7. RE17 – Slab Level**

8.2 It is recommended that conservation area consent is granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. TL4 – Time Limit**
- 2. CN1 – Demolition in conservation area.**

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