

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P12/V0291/COU</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	CHANGE OF USE
<b>REGISTERED</b>	8 February 2012
<b>PARISH</b>	STANFORD IN THE VALE
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Robert Sharp
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Mr and Mrs Ben Preston
<b>SITE</b>	The Anchor 1 High Street Stanford in the Vale Faringdon SN7 8LH
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Change of use from public house (A4) with ancillary residential accommodation to a dwelling (C3) (without building work)
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	None
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	434315/193480
<b>OFFICER</b>	Laura Hudson

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application relates to The Anchor public house, located in the heart of Stanford in the Vale, opposite The Green. The building is not listed but is located in the village conservation area.
- 1.2 The building fronts the road with a small tarmac forecourt and there is a small area of parking to the rear and a relatively large garden.
- 1.3 The public house ceased trading in January 2011.
- 1.4 The application comes to committee as Stanford in the Vale Parish Council objects, and at the request of the local member.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the building from a public house (use class A4) to a single dwelling (use class C3).
- 2.2 The building currently contains an open plan trading area on the ground floor with kitchen, toilets and store. The first floor consists of a three bedroom flat with lounge and WC, but no separate kitchen.
- 2.3 Whilst the conversion would require substantial internal alterations and refurbishment, there are no external alterations proposed as part of the application. The consideration of this application relates only to the principle of the proposed change of use.
- 2.4 The application is accompanied by a supporting statement prepared by Fleurets and the council has commissioned an independent report by Dunster and Morton.
- 2.5 A site location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

## 3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Stanford in the Vale Parish Council – “Object for the following reasons:
  - Objections from parishioners

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- Loss of village community amenity
- Loss of jobs
- Loss of central village amenity
- Loss of “right of way”
- Not in keeping”

An additional letter has been received from the parish council pointing out that the parish council had considered a separate application for a change of use to a takeaway about 400m from The Anchor and that any argument that the use of the pub was unviable seemed anomalous.

3.2 The local member, Cllr. Robert Sharp, has requested that the application be considered by committee stating that the application had raised enormous debate within the village and the wider area, with a large number of comments mainly objecting but some in support so it is only fair to everyone that the application is debated at committee. Cllr. Robert Sharp’s full comments are **attached** at appendix 2.

3.3 CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) objects to the application. Their full comments are **attached** at appendix 3.

3.4 88 letters of objection have been received from local residents raising the following concerns:

- Too many public houses are being lost and they are the hub of communities.
- This is the only pub in the centre of the village.
- The building would be an ideal location for a restaurant or coffee shop.
- The proposal will change the appearance of the area.
- The pub is located in the heart of the village.
- The other pub in Stanford in the Vale is located across a main road.
- The pub was not advertised for sale widely enough.
- The pub provided an important village meeting place.
- The business has not received the necessary level of investment in recent years by Greene King.
- The proposal will harm the historic value of the village.
- The village has lost many amenities recently including the post office and newsagents.
- No attempt has been made to operate the premises as a free house.
- The village is large enough to support two pubs.
- The proposal will lead to further development behind the pub.
- The proposal will result in the loss of employment.
- The proposal will prevent the use of a right of way through the site.
- The proposal will create a parking problem adding a possible further four cars.

3.5 18 letters of support have been received from local residents and one letter has been signed by a further five local residents stating:

- The pub has not been viable for many years despite efforts to introduce food etc.
- The building is unsuitable for other commercial uses.
- The building and its interior layout are poorly designed for a pub.
- The proposal will ensure that this attractive building is restored and maintained.
- The Horse and Jockey is a much better premises.
- There has been insufficient demand in recent years despite efforts from a

series of tenants.

- The building is surrounded on all sides by residential properties, therefore a residential use seems appropriate.
- The building is in need of significant renovation which would be unviable for any business.
- The Co-op sells alcohol and the village hall caters for social events and the various clubs and there is still the Horse and Jockey.
- The pub was not supported by local residents.

#### 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

##### 4.1 [P08/V0592](#) - Approved (12/06/2008)

Erection of lean-to smoking shelter to rear and new fence to garden.

##### 4.2 [P03/V0689](#) - Refused (05/06/2003)

Alterations and new front porch.

##### 4.3 [P99/V0755](#) - Approved (16/09/1999)

Extension and alterations.

#### 5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

Vale of White Horse Local Plan

5.1 Policy C relates to public houses stating that the redevelopment of premises that are used or have been used as a public house will be permitted unless there is evidence that they form an important local community facility where it must be demonstrated that the use is not economically viable, or for facilities within the larger villages in the district (including Stanford in the Vale) that there is no reasonable likelihood of an alternative employment, retail or community use which would benefit the economic or social life of the village.

5.2 Policy HE1 refers to development in conservation areas stating that development will only be permitted if the character of the area is preserved or enhanced.

*National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

5.3 The core principle of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

5.4 Paragraph 28 refers to supporting the rural economy stating that development should promote the retention of local services and community facilities in villages, including public houses. Paragraph 70 reiterates this in the context of promoting healthy communities.

5.5 The NPPF also seeks to boost the supply of housing and in rural areas locate housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities (section 6). The NPPF also encourages the use of empty and redundant buildings for residential use (paras. 51 and 55).

#### 6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main issues to consider in determining this application are:

i) whether The Anchor constituted an important community facility and whether its continued use as a pub is economically viable; ii) whether there are any alternative community uses that could occupy the building; and iii) the impact of the proposal on the character of the conservation area.

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- 6.2 The Anchor ceased trading in January 2011 after declining turnover and a series of different tenants over a period of about 12 years. The Fleurets report submitted with the application shows a declining beer volume figure of 143 barrels per year in 2003/04 to only 50 in 2010/11. This suggests that the premises has suffered a decline in popularity and use by the local community in recent years and brings into question its value as an important local facility.
- 6.3 This decline has also been attributed to the change in culture in recent years, the economic downturn, which has led to an increase in cheaper supermarket alcohol sales and, in the case of Stanford in the Vale, the existence of alternatives in the village. These include subsidised social and football club bars and the Co-op store in the village which all sell alcohol.
- 6.4 The council has commissioned an independent assessment of the submitted Fleurets report which also cites the above factors as reasons for the likely decline of The Anchor. Both reports (which pay regard to the CAMRA Public House Viability Test document) conclude that there have been reasonable efforts over the years to run a successful business – such as holding events, including music, increasing opening hours, and attempting a range of different food options. However, these all require the support of the local community which has been lacking, most likely due to other alternatives in the village.
- 6.5 There is another public house (The Horse and Jockey) on the western edge of the village on the A417 which is thriving despite its peripheral location. However, that public house has a much larger trading area and car park in addition to three letting rooms and, most significantly, it benefits from passing trade which The Anchor does not. Trade at The Anchor would have largely been reliant on the village community or establishing itself as a destination outlet, however the council's consultant considers this latter option unlikely given the large number of licensed premises in the area, including in Wantage and Faringdon. In addition to this a destination outlet would be largely food based which the council's consultant considers would be difficult given the limited trading area which would be difficult to improve without significant expense.
- 6.6 The overall cost of upgrading the facilities and the significant general refurbishment required, estimated in the region of £150,000, further restricted the potential of the public house and resulted in limited interest when it was marketed as a going concern.
- 6.7 The council's consultant considers that marketing the property at £250,000 was a realistic price and would not have deterred potential purchasers of the property as a public house. He also concludes that the marketing exercise carried out by Fleurets was extensive and, as a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the use of the building as a pub is no longer a viable proposition.
- 6.8 Both reports conclude that The Anchor was not supported by the local community and that there are other meeting and drinking facilities within the village to meet the needs of local residents. In addition it is also concluded that the continued use of the property as a public house would be unviable due to the high cost of finance, poor returns and the cost of repairing and refurbishing the building.
- 6.9 Part ii) of local plan policy CF5 requires that in the event that the use of the building as a public house proves unviable, proposals should consider alternative employment, retail or community uses over residential. Whilst the applicants have not explored this option it should be noted that the village already benefits from a large convenience store and post office, hairdressers, village hall, social club bar, football club bar, and office premises. The former newsagents and separate pharmacy premises have

recently closed so there are vacant premises available in the village. The village, therefore, already benefits from a good range of community and employment facilities for a settlement of its size. Given the restricted nature of the building and the necessary costs of refurbishment it seems reasonable to assume that any other commercial or community uses would also prove unviable.

- 6.10 The parish council refers to a recent planning application for a takeaway which is still pending a decision, however this is not relevant to the consideration of this planning application. All applications must be considered on the individual merits of the case.
- 6.11 Given the current condition of the building it is considered that the proposed change of use would ensure its refurbishment and future maintenance, which would enhance the character of the conservation area. Whilst the application does not include any external alterations to the building, a condition is recommended requiring details of any changes to be agreed to ensure the character of the building and conservation area are preserved.
- 6.12 Comments have been submitted in relation to the loss of a right of way currently running through the garden of the property. Whilst the existence of this right of way appears to be in dispute with the applicants this is not a planning matter and is not relevant to the consideration of this planning application.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Whilst it is disappointing that The Anchor public house would be lost from the village, both the applicant's and the council's expert's reports conclude that the premises is unviable as a going concern and that its physical constraints, state of disrepair and location away from passing trade, plus the presence of alternative provision within the village, mean that refusal of planning permission could not be justified.

## 8.0 RECOMMENDATION

***It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions;***

- 1. TL1 – Time limit***
- 2. List of approved plans***
- 3. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, full details of any proposed external alterations to the building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.***
- 4. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, full details of the proposed parking area shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.***

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