

BLE/19377 & BLE/19377/1-LB – D A Phillips and Co Ltd
Change of Use from Offices to Residential.
Ashbrook Mews, Westbrook Street, Blewbury

1.0 **The Proposal**

- 1.1 These applications seek planning permission and listed building consent for the change of use of the courtyard of outbuildings adjacent to Ashbrook House, to residential use. The buildings are curtilage listed due to their relationship to the main house, and are currently used as offices, some of which are vacant. The north eastern most unit is proposed to be retained in office use with parking to the rear.
- 1.2 The remaining units are proposed to be converted to residential use. Units 5 and 6 are proposed as independent residential units with parking within the courtyard and private amenity space to the rear. Units 1 to 4 are one bedroom units but have no private amenity space and are therefore proposed as holiday let/serviced accommodation with parking in the courtyard. The whole scheme proposes 10 parking spaces within the courtyard.
- 1.3 The conversion requires little alteration to the external appearance of the buildings and only some minor internal alterations.
- 1.4 Extracts from the application plans are at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.5 The site is within the Blewbury Conservation Area.
- 1.6 The application comes to Committee due to an objection from the Parish Council.

2.0 **Planning History**

- 2.1 Planning permission and listed building consent were granted in 1989 for a change of use of the buildings to a village business centre for uses A2 and B1 and associated alterations.
- 2.2 Prior to this some of the buildings were in residential use.

3.0 **Planning Policies**

- 3.1 Policy HE11 of the adopted Local Plan refers to the change of use, alterations and extensions to listed buildings and states that the special architectural or historic interest of the buildings and their settings should be preserved.
- 3.2 Policy HE6 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan covers the same issues.
- 3.3 Policies D1, D2 and D3 of the adopted Local Plan refer to the design of new development, the impact on neighbouring properties, and access and parking provision.
- 3.4 The same issues are covered by Policies DC1, DC5 and DC9 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan.
- 3.5 Policy E15 of the Second Deposit Local Plan refers to development resulting in the loss of appropriately located small-scale commercial premises within settlements and states that proposals will not be permitted if it reduces employment where other opportunities are limited, harms the character and appearance of the area or affects the traffic levels in the area.

4.0 **Consultations**

- 4.1 Blewbury Parish Council objects to the application and their comments are attached at **Appendix 2**.

- 4.2 2 letters of objection have been received from neighbouring residents raising the following concerns:
- The number of residential units proposed is not clear on the plans
 - The proposed parking provision does not appear adequate for the proposed units and the existing Solicitors office – on street parking in Westbrook Street is not acceptable.
 - The current office use is quiet, however a residential use will result in additional noise particularly from the garden areas of the two dwellings.
 - Current right of access across the courtyard may be lost
 - The drainage system is not adequate
 - Loss of business premises in the village.
- 4.3 The County Engineer's comments have not been received and will be reported orally at the Meeting.
- 5.0 **Officer Comments**
- 5.1 The main issues to consider in determining this application are: i) whether the principle of converting existing business accommodation to residential use is acceptable in this location; ii) the impact of the use on the character of the conservation area and the setting of Ashbrook House; iii) the impact of the proposal on the amenities of neighbouring residential properties; and iv) whether the access and parking provision are adequate.
- 5.2 In terms of the principle of conversion, which will result in the loss of commercial premises, it is considered that, bearing in mind the amount of employment generating uses in this part of the district (Milton Park, UKAEA, Harwell etc), the fact that some of the units are vacant, and the previous residential use of these buildings, and taking into account their small scale, the principle of the proposal is acceptable.
- 5.3 Units 1 to 4 which are one bedroom units are proposed as temporary accommodation in the form of holiday lets or serviced units. Officers consider that these are not suitable for permanent residential use as they have no private curtilage, therefore a condition restricting the use is recommended. Units 5 and 6, however, are considered suitable as there is sufficient private amenity space to the rear of each unit, and parking to the front.
- 5.4 Some of the buildings to which these applications relate were previously in residential use before being converted to B1/A2 use in 1989. The buildings, therefore, lend themselves to conversion back to residential use with little alteration. With this in mind, Officers do not consider that the minor alterations would have any impact on the setting of Ashbrook House or the character of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, the courtyard is currently an area of hard standing tarmac and the proposed parking area incorporates some landscaping to this which will enhance the area.
- 5.5 Concern has been raised by one of the neighbouring properties over the noise and disturbance caused by the use of the area to the rear of units 5 and 6 as residential curtilage. These units were formerly in residential use and are located in a predominantly residential area, therefore any disturbance caused would not be above that which could normally be expected in a village location. The only external alteration proposed facing the immediate neighbour is the insertion of ground floor patio doors in place of a window.
- 5.6 In terms of highway safety, the proposed units would be accessed via the existing access to the site which currently serves the business units. The scheme incorporates 1 space for each of the one bedroom serviced units, and a further 6 spaces for the separate dwellings, one of which has 2 bedrooms and the other 4 bedrooms. Although the County Engineer's comments have yet to be received, he is not expected to raise any objections. Officers consider that the proposal provides adequate car parking and, bearing in mind the existing business use, refusal could not be justified on highway safety grounds.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *It is recommended that subject to an objection from the County Engineer, planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL1 Time Limit – Full Application*
2. *CN8 Full Details to be Submitted (new joinery – windows and doors)*
3. *LS2 Implementation of Landscaping Scheme to be submitted*
4. *Notwithstanding the details on the approved plans, full details of the proposed surface material to be used on the car parking area shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. The car park shall only be surfaced in the approved material.*
5. *RE2 Restriction on Extensions and Alterations to the Dwellings*
6. *RE8 Submission of Drainage Details (surface water and foul sewage)*
7. *Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2005 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order) the buildings shall be used solely for holiday accommodation or serviced accommodation and for no other purpose whatsoever and shall not be continually occupied by the same persons for a period exceeding 28 days in any 90 day period unless otherwise agreed in writing by the District Planning Authority.*
8. *Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, a scheme for the provision of a bin store within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of the proposed location and design of the store. The development shall only be carried out using the approved details.*

6.2 *It is recommended that Listed Building Consent is granted subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL4 Time Limit*
2. *CN8 Full Details to be Submitted (new joinery – windows and doors)*