

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V2024/FUL and P13/V2025/CA
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION & CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT
REGISTERED PARISH	3.10.2013 WANTAGE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Charlotte Dickson John Morgan Fiona Roper
APPLICANT SITE PROPOSAL	Mr and Mrs P Newton 20 Church Street, Wantage, OX12 8BL Demolition of existing building and erection of two new dwellings (resubmission).
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	439697/187853
OFFICER	Peter Brampton

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2010, the redevelopment of 21 Church Street, Wantage was approved by the council. This proposal was for the demolition of the existing commercial storage units at the rear of the site, the erection of two 3-bed semi detached dwellings and the subdivision of No.21 Church Street into two 2-bed and one 1-bed units. Work started on this project in January 2013, with a predicted finish of February 2014. This development is known as Kent Mews.
- 1.2 Within the front courtyard area of Kent Mews lays the building subject of these applications. Known locally as Legges Cottage, No.20 Church Street is a two-storey residential dwelling attached to The Vale and Downland Museum, which is a Grade II listed building. The building immediately abuts the conservation area. It has most recently been used as the contractor's office for the Kent Mews development and before that as a kitchen and storage facility for the museum.
- 1.3 A location plan is **attached** as Appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 These applications propose the demolition of No.20 in its entirety and the erection of a pair of one-bed two-storey cottages. The size of the cottages are limited to the confines of the existing building, with the width reduced over the existing building to allow easier access for vehicles and pedestrians for the new houses and the Kent Mews developments.
- 2.2 Extracts from the applications plans are **attached** as Appendix 2. Documents submitted in support of the application, including the design and access statement and a structural survey, are available on the council's website.

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 **Wantage Town Council** – Recommends refusal, *“Given the information about the condition of the building, there is no objection to it being demolished. There is an objection to the proposed building to replace it. It is felt that it should be replaced with a building of similar design, layout, facings and materials as existing.”*
- County Archaeologist** - No objections, subject to conditions requiring scheme of investigation and an archaeological watching brief, subject to work commencing

Conservation Officer – No objections, but identifies the historic building assessment accompanying the application lacks sufficient detail to be acceptable as a full paper record of the building to be removed. Conservation Area Consent should be granted subject to a detailed condition requiring a full historic survey of the building. Planning permission should be granted subject to a number of conditions relating to the details of the replacement building.

Countryside Officer – No comments received at time of writing. Verbal update for committee.

OCC Highways Authority – No comments received at time of writing. Verbal update for committee.

Neighbour Representations – None received.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 [P13/V1070/FUL](#) – Withdrawn prior to determination (17/06/2013)

Demolition of existing dwelling. Erection of two new dwellings.

[P13/V1071/CA](#) – Withdrawn prior to determination (17/06/2013)

Demolition of existing dwelling.

[P10/V0077/LB](#) - Approved (11/03/2010)

Demolition of the existing commercial storage units to the rear of the site. Erection of 2 x 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the subdivision of no.21 Church Street and ancillary outbuildings into 2 x 2 bed and 1 x 1 bed units.

[P10/V0076](#) - Approved (11/03/2010)

Demolition of the existing commercial storage units to the rear of the site. Erection of 2 x 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the subdivision of no.21 Church Street and ancillary outbuildings into 2 x 2 bed and 1 x 1 bed units.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

GS1 - Developments in Existing Settlements

DC1 - Design

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

H10 - Development in the Five Main Settlements

HE1 - Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development

HE5 - Development involving alterations to a listed building

HE11 - Archaeology

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Residential Design Guide – 2009

Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Conservation Area Consent (P13/V2025/CA only)

6.1 When considering an application for conservation area consent, there are two primary assessments. The first is whether the building makes a positive and important contribution to the character of the conservation area. The second is the structural condition of the building. In this particular instance, the applicant argues that the building is in a very poor condition structurally and cannot be restored to a point it would be suitable for use as a dwelling again.

6.2 In support of this assessment, the applicants have provided a copy of a demolition order from 1973 for the property, and a full, recent, structural survey of the building.

- 6.3 Turning to the first assessment, this is quite a significant building despite being just outside the conservation area. It plays an important role in the setting of the conservation area, the Kent Mews development and the adjacent listed building. The site is particularly prominent when viewed from the church opposite. The council's conservation officer has confirmed the building has fabric and features of architectural and historic interest. These predominantly date from the 18th and 19th century. Therefore, if possible, the council would want to see this building retained.
- 6.4 However, as outlined above, the applicant contends the building is beyond repair. A previous application for this scheme was withdrawn prior to its refusal, as the council did not consider an adequate case for the removal of the building had been made. Whilst the 1973 demolition order is useful evidence, the building has remained in place since that time, with very little repairs necessary to keep it that way.
- 6.5 Nonetheless, the structural survey accompanying the application is unequivocal. It states, "*[This] is a fragile structure of single brickwork construction, relying entirely upon its cellular nature for its stability, and that it has not been provided with adequate foundations...In normal circumstances...a course of underpinning...can often be considered as a way of improving the stability of the structure...In the case of Legges Cottage...the lack of foundation and the breakdown of the cellular nature of the building, together with the single leaf masonry construction...[means] remedial works in terms of underpinning the existing walls would not successfully provide the stability required. The building is showing evidence of instability...and an inability to maintain its form in the event of underpinning.*"
- 6.6 The report goes on to state that the application of domestic loadings to the first floor would produce "*excessive deflection*" within the first floor structure, further weakening the integrity of the single leaf walling. The report concludes, "*It is recommended that the building is demolished in its entirety and provided with an adequate structure to provide the required accommodation.*"
- 6.7 The council's conservation officer has visited the site and inspected the exterior and interior of the building. Their observations tally with the conclusions of the report. This building is simply not capable of being repaired to a condition that would meet modern building regulations for residential properties. Consequently, the demolition of this building can be accepted.
- 6.8 Given the importance of the building to the history and evolution of the area, a historic survey is necessary to record the features of interest that will be lost. The applicant has agreed to a detailed condition that will require a full photographic and written record of the walls, external and internal roof structure, internal layout and all other elements of the house. This survey will be completed and agreed prior to demolition work commencing on site.

Principle of residential development

- 6.9 Policy H10 confirms that the principle of residential development within the built up limits of Wantage is acceptable. This is provided the character of the area is preserved and there is no loss of facilities.

Character and appearance

- 6.10 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan states that development will be permitted provided that it is of high quality and inclusive design. The layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials and relationship to adjoining buildings should not adversely affect those attributes that make a positive contribution to the character of the locality. Policies DC5, DC6 and DC9 seek to ensure that all new development is acceptable in terms of

highway safety, include hard and soft landscaping measures and does not cause harm to the amenity of neighbours.

- 6.11 Policy HE1 of the Local Plan states, “*Proposals for development...within or affecting the setting of a conservation area will not be permitted unless they can be shown to preserve or enhance the established character or appearance of the area.*”
- 6.12 The design of the new dwellings has been the subject of extensive discussion with the council’s conservation officer. The scheme now proposed is considered acceptable. Wantage Town Council considers the proposed building should match that it will replace in terms of design, scale and appearance. However, this is not the approach the conservation officer favours.
- 6.13 In contrast, the council and the applicant have agreed that the new dwelling should reflect the new units being erected to the rear of the Kent Mews development, and the refurbished 21 Church Street. This is because the new dwellings would be part of the Kent Mews development, and, although attached to the museum, would have no associated with it. Consequently, the applicant proposes to use the same bricks and roof tiles as used on the Kent Mews development. This will create a visual coherence to the whole site that has an acceptable impact on the character of the conservation area.
- 6.14 In terms of scale, the new building is comparable to the existing. As discussed, there is a reduction in width from the existing building (from 10.5 metres wide to 9.9 metres wide). The increase in height is from 6.8 metres to 7.6 metres when viewed from the front. Thus, the increase in height and the decrease in width will somewhat cancel each other out in terms of the visual impact of the building on the wider area.
- 6.15 In terms of design, there are some regrettable elements, but these are not sufficient to warrant a refusal of planning permission. The proposed layout requires dormer windows to serve the bathrooms of each property. It would be preferable for the bathrooms to be located at the rear, with the dormers providing additional light to the bedroom of each house. This would be in accordance with the council’s residential design guide.
- 6.16 Generally, the window frames on the front and rear elevations are rather thick-set, creating a slightly cramped appearance on the front elevation in particular. The large French doors to the rear elevations are not traditionally proportioned openings.
- 6.17 Overall, these are minor criticisms of a scheme that is generally well designed and sympathetic to the new mews development around it. The scale of the new dwellings is appropriate to the location. This development will preserve the character of the conservation area. Conditions relating to slab and ridge heights, materials, joinery details and new flues, vents etc are necessary to ensure the quality of the development. Furthermore, given the small size of the site and its sensitive location, a condition restricting all permitted development rights for the new properties is necessary.

Future living conditions

- 6.18 The overall living conditions for the occupants of the two new homes will be acceptable, given the town centre location. Both properties will benefit from small rear yards, with a separate cycle and bin store for the mews development as a whole. The overall size of the accommodation is reasonable for a one-bed development, with a single open plan kitchen/diner/lounge on the ground floor, with bed and shower facilities at first floor.

Relationship to surrounding properties

- 6.19 The proposal will not have a significant impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties. There are no windows that will allow a direct increase in overlooking of neighbouring properties, particularly given the presence of the existing building. The rear roof lights are positioned sufficiently high on the roof to prevent overlooking. The first floor dormer windows will serve bathrooms and so will likely be obscure glazed. Regardless, these windows will primarily look over Church Street, rather than any neighbour within the Kent Mews development.
- 6.20 The increase in height will not cause a loss of light or outlook to any neighbouring property.

Highway Safety

- 6.21 The overall level of parking for this proposal has been previously agreed in respect of the initial redevelopment of 21 Church Street. Eight parking spaces will be provided for seven dwellings. The previous approval provided seven spaces for six properties (including No.20). This takes account of the extremely sustainable nature of the site, which lies on the edge of Wantage Town Centre. There is provision for a cycle store on site, as discussed, whilst public transport links within the town are excellent.
- 6.22 Thus, whilst the overall level of parking provision is less than the Local Plan requires, the sustainable nature of the site means there are no objections on this point. A verbal update from the Highways Authority will be provided to the planning committee.
- 6.23 The reduction in width of the replacement building over the existing cottage will improve the access, turning and manoeuvring space within the site and can be controlled by condition.

Ecology

- 6.24 At the time of writing, the council's countryside officer has yet to confirm whether the existing building is suitable for roosting bats. A verbal update to committee on this assessment, including any additional conditions, will be offered.

Other Issues

- 6.25 There are no trees affected by this development. There is no real scope for additional landscaping with the site. A condition will require details of boundary treatments to be agreed prior to work commencing on site.
- 6.26 There is sufficient space within the application site for bin storage.
- 6.27 The standard condition relating to access, parking and turning will also require the applicants to prevent surface water running off onto the highway. The new houses will be able to connect to the existing mains sewerage in Wantage.
- 6.28 Given the historic nature of the site, the County Archaeologist requires a scheme of investigation and a watching brief to be agreed before and during construction works. Standard conditions can secure this.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The existing building to be demolished dates from the 18th century and has a number of features that are of architectural and historic interest. Therefore, before the council can entertain the prospect of it being removed completely, the applicant has needed to demonstrate the building is unsafe and cannot be repaired to a habitable condition. The structural survey accompanying the application confirms this is the case and so there are no objections to the removal of the building. This is subject to the relevant

conditions, which include a requirement for a detailed historic record of the building to be agreed prior to any demolition taking place.

- 7.2 The proposed replacement dwellings do not match the existing building in terms of design or materials. However, they do match the adjacent Kent Mews development in these terms. Given the new dwellings will form part of the same development, this approach is acceptable. The proposed dwellings will preserve the character of the conservation area. They will also not have an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity or highway safety. Therefore, these applications accord with national and local planning policy and should be approved.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission and conservation area consent subject to the following:

Planning permission conditions

1. Commencement three years
2. Approved plans
3. Slab and ridge levels, relative to fixed datum point
4. Details of materials to be agreed
5. Joinery details for windows and doors to be agreed
6. All new flues, vents and external pipes to be agreed
7. Access, parking & turning in accordance with plan
8. Boundary details to be agreed
9. Permitted development restriction extensions and outbuildings
10. Scheme of archaeological investigation to be agreed
11. Archaeological watching brief

Conservation area consent conditions

1. Commencement three years
2. Approved plans
3. Planning permission and contract for demolition works to be secured prior to commencement
4. Detailed historic survey of existing building to be agreed prior to commencement

Author: Peter Brampton
Contact Number: 01491 823751
Email: peter.brampton@southandvale.gov.uk