

APPLICATION NO.	P14/V0133/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	20.1.2014
PARISH	GROVE
WARD MEMBER(S)	John Amys Sue Marchant Kate Precious
APPLICANT	Mrs. C. Hilsdon
SITE	Volunteer Inn Station Road Grove Wantage, OX12 0PH
PROPOSAL	Conversion of existing pub (A4) to motel (C1) including side and rear extensions and new front porch. Erection of three bay car wash (<i>sui generis</i>) and repair centre and erection of new American style diner (A3) with new access to the rear. (<i>officer additions in italics</i>)
AMENDMENTS	Provision of 13 new off-site parking spaces
GRID REFERENCE	441048/191256
OFFICER	Mark Doodes

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Volunteer Inn is a currently closed period public house located off Station Road to the north of Grove, close to the Williams site. It is sited in a long narrow plot running at the intersection of the A338 and the railway. Woodland surrounds the site, with a small industrial park to the north-east.
- 1.2 The site attracts no special planning designation.
- 1.3 The application must be considered by committee due to the involvement of Councillor Anthony Hayward, who is the agent/architect.
- 1.4 The site location plan can be found **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Following pre-application discussions, the proposals are in five areas.
- 1) To convert the existing pub to hotel accommodation, comprising 11 rooms.
 - 2) To erect a flat roofed side extension measuring a total of 18.8m, split into two sections. A 5.8m bulkier side extension to the current double fronted unit and a 12m further side extension measuring 4.2m high to accommodate a 75 cover diner-style restaurant.
 - 3) The erection of a 14m wide by 4m tall car wash facility at the end of the parking area which will resemble a three bay industrial unit.
 - 4) Various changes to the access, parking, entrance ramp and cladding / appearance of the pub, which are evident from the plans attached.
 - 5) Two new areas of parking in the wooded areas to the rear and side and new means of access to the lane at the rear of the unit. Options have been taken on this land.
- 2.2 Plans can be found **attached** at appendix 2.

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Crime Prevention Design Adviser – No strong views

Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council) – Holding Objection. Unsustainable location. Visibility splays not demonstrated. Low level of parking. Further parking has been provided over the original scheme however concerns persist as regards the local.

Drainage Engineer – No objection. Conditions recommended for a SUDs scheme.

Grove Parish Council – No objection.

Neighbour Object (4) – Traffic generation, wear and tear, disturbance to domestic life, not in keeping, drainage, poor business plan, woodland impact.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 [P13/V2028/PEM](#) – (02/10/2013)

To refurbish the pub and turn into a traditional American diner. To convert / expand an area of the pub into additional guest rooms. Also, to provide a car valeting service from the end of the car park for which a timber garage will be erected.

[P13/V1099/PEM](#) – Responded to (18/06/2013)

Proposed conversion from public house to a residential dwelling.

[P10/V0429/A](#) – Approved (05/05/2010)

Erection of individual letters fixed to the wall of the property as follows: 2 signs reading “The Volunteer”, 1 sign being the Hook Norton Brewery name and logo. New pub swing sign on the front (road) boundary of the site, max height approx 5500mm.

[P10/V0428](#) – Approved (05/05/2010)

Demolition of front porch and entrance stairs. Erection of new front porch, new entrance stairs and ramped access. New external signage.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

DC1 - Design

DC5 - Access

DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

DC13 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off

DC14 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off

E9 - New Development on Sites not Identified in the Local Plan

GS8 - Re-use of non vernacular buildings outside settlements

NE9 - The Lowland Vale

T1 - New tourist related development

T2 - Tourist facilities on existing sites

5.2 NPPF (2012) – Balancing competing demands on land use to promote sustainable development. Paragraphs 7, 8, 9.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The key issues for this application are the principle of development, the highways issues and the impact of the works on the character of the original unit/area.

- 6.2 Turning firstly to the principle of development, the current A4 use (pub) allows for changes to be made without permission to retail, professional services or restaurants. This means that the Volunteer could become a mini-supermarket or other shop, the premises for a firm of solicitors or a restaurant without the need for express consent. Officers consider this somewhat weakens the highways liaison officer's stance in terms of objecting to the land use but the issue is complicated as the application is for three distinct uses.
- 6.3 Officers note the lack of detail/speciation from the applicant on submitted documentation regarding the use classes proposed. The LPA has reached the view that the car washing facilities do not constitute a B2 use in this instance, which specifically cites "cleaning" within the encompassed range of services. Officers reach this view since the thrust of appeal decisions on the subject conclude that a valeting use should be classified as either *sui-generis* or light industry provided that no noisy machinery or tools are employed which would bring the use within the B2 general industrial class. With the restaurant / hotel forming the bulk of the employment and activity on the site officer favour that such relatively ancillary use should be considered *sui generis*. Officers are hesitant to include a B1 within the scope of this consent, as further subdivision or intensification of the site may be undesirable or at the least something the local planning authority would seek to control. The works appear to be a minor aspect of the overall scheme and therefore officers feel that a *sui-generis* classification would be the most appropriate in this consent.
- 6.4 Officers also note that there is a desire to see the site put into some form of non-residential use. The NPPF encourages local planning authorities to be proactive and supportive of business, the issue at hand is does the application satisfy officers fully in all regards.
- 6.5 Highways – The highways liaison officer objects to the application as being in an unsustainable location, and having a lack of parking commensurate with the intensity of business use proposed. The parking is a matter of concern. The total provision for the site including new spaces to the rear of the pub and adjacent on third party land (for which options exist) is 38 spaces. With there being 11 hotel rooms and up to 13 staff onsite at any given moment, this pool diminishes to between 14-20 spaces, depending on the efficacy of a green travel plan.
- 6.6 The out-of-town location makes it reasonable to assume that most journeys will be made by private motor car. Even assuming cars have an occupancy of three, which is optimistic, the 75 cover restaurant will likely quickly fill the available parking. Assuming staff are prohibited to park on site, again, all cars must be occupied by three persons to be able to accommodate the within the site.
- 6.7 This simple analysis contains some assumptions however;
- 1) that no tables are occupied by people staying at the hotel,
 - 2) that no parking is occupied by those using solely the car wash and
 - 3) that the restaurant will be at capacity most of the time.
 - 4) not a single user of the site uses public transport / motorcycle / cycle.
 - 5) the other options for off-site parking on the A338 are unsafe, leading to possible overspill parking on Grove Park Road.
 - 6) The restaurant operators may self-police parking noting the number of reservations etc.
 - 7) That no users of the site work / park at the Williams site opposite.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 21 May 2014

- 6.8 Councillors must reach their own conclusions on these assumptions, however officers feel that, in any event, a *severe highways impact* (as per NPPF) will be difficult to demonstrate at appeal.
- 6.9 Conditions have been appended to ensure that an enforceable green travel plan forms part of the staff pattern of travel. Details of secure cycle storage will also need to be provided prior to use.
- 6.10 Design – The changes proposed to the building are considerable and need further consideration. The building is not listed, and not within a conservation area. Although attractive and in reasonable condition, with the exception of a post-war insensitive porch and more recent access ramp, the unit is not considered a *non-designated heritage* asset by officers within any reasonable interpretation of the term. The NPPF cautions against imposing design or style guides and instead focuses on the works reflecting local character. To this end, the theme of an American diner fails in this regard, however several attempts to revive the Volunteer as a going concern have failed, perhaps due (in part) to the lack of distinctive identity for the building. The transformation of the buildings appearance to that of an American diner with wooden cladding, a veranda style porch, wooden shutters and neon lighting are a marked difference to the previous appearance. The building is relatively isolated, and does not form part of a cluster of similar units, whose collective character would be harmed. Although officers accept the change in appearance is dramatic, the changes to the Inn have a clear identity of their own and have been designed as such.
- 6.11 Car wash – A 14m wide 4m tall three birth car bay is proposed. The structure is 8m deep. This of a similar size to a modest car mechanics or light industrial unit. However, officers note the presence of landscaping on the cutting (shown in officer photographs) and that the embankment over the railway both lend significant mitigating factors to initial strong concerns. The long thin site also lends itself to reducing visual prominence of the car wash. Highways officers are concerned that the use of this area of the car park will impact unacceptably on the quantum of parking. For the reasons set out in 6.2 officers are less concerned in this regard. However, for the reasons set out in 6.3 the granting of consent for a part B1 or B2 use on this site will be resisted, instead the car wash is considered as *sui-generis* meaning that any variation in this use would attract a planning application. To ensure that the car wash business remains narrow so, conditions have been appended to restrict such uses as car sales, panel beating, mechanical repairs etc.
- 6.12 Side/rear extension – The rear extension and side extension to the Inn are considered to be acceptable. The rear elevation is barely visible from most public areas and will form part a key strand in improving the sites viability by investment. The extension proposals are relatively subordinate. The NPPF at paragraph 9 supports such works which will make it “... *easier for jobs to be created in cities/towns and villages*”. As stated elsewhere the building is not listed, and of all aspects of the scheme proposed the Inn extensions are considered to be the most compliant with established design guide policies.
- 6.13 New restaurant element – At 12m by 12m the 75 cover restaurant is substantial in size. The slab level of the Inn is somewhat higher by approx 1m (no dimensions provided) meaning that the 4m tall structure will appear more similar to a 3m flat roved side extension. The main entrance to the restaurant business will be at the side (end) facing the car park. The materials proposed will be glazed aluminium panels and with a flat “neoprene” roof. The structure appears to be very lightweight, possibly in an attempt to reduce its bulk and mass, however the structure must conform to building regulations as regards thermal efficiency. Officers are comfortable that the building regulations

system is best suited to control such matters and raise no further concerns regarding the energy efficiency of such materials.

- 6.14 Economic case – it is estimated that around 40 persons will find employment as a result of the works, with 13 people simultaneously at peak times. The type of work offered will be lower skilled (waiting staff, car cleaners, short order chef, bar staff etc) and flexible evening/weekend shift work that will suit a range of local people and suit a range of individual circumstances. Information is not provided about how much employment is provided over and above an A4 sole use (i.e. the Volunteer as-was) however it is obvious that being solely a pub such employment would be far lower. It is considered that the economic case for the scheme is good and that the figures provided are realistic and reasonable. The NPPF places much weight on the economic aspects of (non-residential) schemes in determining the balance between sustainable and unsustainable development. In this instance officers assign much weight to this factor, noting that the site is located on a busy A-road that will be provide many opportunities for passing trade.
- 6.15 Neighbour impact – There is one domestic home around 50m away. The occupants have objected strongly to the works on many grounds listed in section 3. Officers note that the separation is large and the relationship between the home and the business premises is one that has been in place for many years. The issue at hand is of the intensification of the use of the site. Having considered the points raised in turn, officers do not feel that such objections are sufficiently reasonable to justify refusal.
- 6.16 Drainage – Drainage officers have recommended the use of a SUDs scheme to ensure that the surface water situation in the area (which is not considered to be particularly poor) is made no worse by the proposals. Conditions have been appended.
- 6.17 Landscaping and tree impact – Little information was submitted regarding trees and no detailed landscaping plan was provided. Conditions to cover these matters have been appended.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Officers assign limited weight to county highways concerns regarding the location itself and limited weight to the matters raised by the four local representations, which raise many non-material considerations such as the apparent lack of a business plan. On this note, the provision of an American style diner is likely to provide a viable lunchtime service (and accommodation for visitors) to staff at the Williams F1 at the very least, and demonstrates that the site has been carefully selected.

Despite concerns over the scale of the restaurant element, officers believe that economic case for the scheme, and the desire to retain the site as an A4 use in some form, are robust cogent reasons to support the scheme in-the-round.

The scheme will revitalise a public house, create employment and widen the choice of services in the area for tourists, businesses and local residents alike.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

Planning Permission be granted subject to the following conditions;

- 1 : Commencement 3 yrs - Full Planning Permission**
- 2 : Approved plans ***
- 3 : Sample materials required (all)**
- 4 : No additional windows, doors or other openings ***
- 5 : No alterations or extensions**
- 6 : UNIQUE - Sustainable Design**

- 7 : New vehicular access ***
- 8 : UNIQUE - Access and Vision Splays**
- 9 : Parking & Manoeuvring Areas Retained ***
- 10 : Cycle Parking Facilities**
- 11 : Green Travel Plans**
- 12 : No Surface Water Drainage to Highway**
- 13 : Landscape Management Plan**
- 14 : Tree Protection (General)**
- 15 : No additional commercial floorspace ***
- 16 : No panel beating / spraying**
- 17 : No sale or display of vehicles**
- 18 : HY8[] - Car Parking Spaces (Det.not shown)Full)**
- 19 : MC24 - Drainage Details (Surface and Foul(Full)**
- 20 : MC29 - Sustainable Drainage Scheme (Full)**

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