

**SHI/11845/3 – Vale Brewery Company
Alterations to existing access and formation of car park.
The General Elliot, 37 Manor Road, South Hinksey, OX1 5AS.**

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the creation of a 35 space car park on land that adjoins the General Elliot public house. The Brewery is seeking to provide additional parking facilities to ensure the long term viability of the pub, which is the only pub in the village.
- 1.2 The site lies to the northwest of the existing pub building and beer garden. The land is currently redundant farm land that originally formed part of the Manor Farm complex to the west. It is accessed from the very end of Manor Road at a point to the east of the beer garden, with the drive running along the boundary of the site into the proposed car park. Manor Road itself runs along the southeast boundary of the site, and leads to the Devil's Backbone right of way that runs towards Oxford. The site is bounded by agricultural land to the north and east of the site. The site lies within the Oxford Green Belt.
- 1.3 A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, the siting of the proposed access and layout of the car park together with the applicant's supporting statement are attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.4 The existing car park for the pub comprises 8 spaces and is situated within the site between the beer garden and the building. In addition to these spaces, the pub originally had a much larger car park to the immediate west of the premises, but when it was sold by Greene king, the former owners of the pub, they retained ownership of this piece of land and prevented its use by erecting bollards.
- 1.5 A planning application for 3 dwellings on the former car park was refused in October 2005 on various grounds, one of which was that the loss of the car park would harm the viability of the public house. A copy of the refused scheme and the decision notice is attached **Appendix 2**. Following this refusal, it is understood the applicants have been in negotiation with Greene King to buy the site to reuse it for car parking, but unfortunately they have not been successful. As a result, they have submitted this application as an alternative to increase parking facilities for the pub.
- 1.6 This application comes to Committee because South Hinksey Parish Council objects to the proposal and several letters of objection and support have been received.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 In 1990 planning permission was granted to use part of the landlord's private garden to the west as a car park and for extensions to the building to provide new toilets and an enlarged bar area.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 *Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016*
Policy G4 states that, within the Oxford Green Belt, development will only be permitted if it maintains its openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities.

- 3.2 Policy G2 states that all development should be of a scale and type appropriate to the site and surroundings, and should incorporate a high quality layout, design and landscaping.
- 3.3 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011*
Policy GS3 (development in the Oxford Green Belt) says that development will only be permitted in the Oxford Green Belt where it does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt and it preserves openness and the special character of Oxford and its landscape setting.
- 3.4 Policies DC1, DC5, DC6, DC9 and DC13 (quality of new development policies) are relevant and seek to ensure that all new development is of a high standard of design / landscaping, does not cause harm to the amenity of neighbours, is acceptable in terms of highway safety, and the flood risk to the development is acceptable and does not result in increasing flooding elsewhere.
- 3.5 Policy TR5 (cycling and walking) states that planning permission will not be granted for development which inhibits the use of any part of the existing footpath or cycle network.
- 3.6 PPG 2 “Green Belts” states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It confirms that Green Belts must be protected as far as can be seen ahead and there is a presumption against inappropriate development. Inappropriate development is by definition ‘*harmful to the Green Belt*’ (paragraph 3.2). Paragraph 3.2 goes on to state that “*Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.*”
- 4.0 **Consultations**
- 4.1 South Hinksey Parish Council has objected to the application. Their comments are attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 County Engineer – “The proposed site is located at the end of Manor Road which is essentially a cul-de-sac. There are a number of footpaths and bridleways in the area. The proposal would reduce on street congestion in the vicinity of the pub and will provide amenity / additional facilities for the village. Therefore, no objection, subject to works on the highway being to OCC specifications, no loose material near the entrance, all gates to open inwards, the provision of a rumble strip at the point of access where it joins the highway, warning signage to advise of vehicles / pedestrians using the narrower section, and suitable landscaping that does not impinge upon sight lines / vision”.
- 4.3 Drainage Engineer – No objections.
- 4.4 Environment Agency – “has assessed this application as having a low environmental risk”.
- 4.5 9 letters of objection have been received and are summarised as follows:

- Access to the new car park will be through an unmade and unlit road, which is very narrow. There are no road markings and only one vehicle can drive through at a time. The road is used frequently by pedestrians, dog walkers and cyclists wishing to gain access to Oxford city centre. Any use by vehicles will be detrimental to the safety of other users. If approved there is a need for a dedicated pavement.
- The existing pub lighting is intrusive to users of the lane and needs adjusting.
- The existing car parking is rarely at capacity, so is there a need for all this additional parking?
- If this is approved the access point should be amended so it goes through the existing entrance gate of the pub premises. This would reduce the conflict of vehicles and pedestrians using the far end of the lane, and would be a much safer alternative.
- The proposal will lead to an increase in traffic through the village.
- The proposal will lead to a conflict in traffic movements from existing residents who have to reverse out of their properties.
- Any reduction in noise and disturbance from customers parking in Manor Road will be negated by the overall increase in traffic going to the new car park.
- The proposal does not show that this will be available as a dedicated village amenity.
- The proposal will drastically impact on the openness of the Green Belt and its visual quality. Any removal of trees / shrubs will only make this worse, and will detract from the landscape setting of the village.
- If approved, the car park should be available for all to use, and not just customers of the pub.

4.6 7 letters of support have been received and are summarised as follows:

- Whilst not normally supporting development in the Green Belt, there are a number of benefits for the community. There is always a problem of where to park in the village. The land in question is scruffy, and if used as a car park would relieve car parking pressures on Manor Road.
- Proper car parking for visitors would help the future viability of the pub as well as improve the general aesthetics of the area. This is therefore a vital development for the well being of the village as a whole and is needed to improve the General Elliot's chances of survival.
- More use of the village hall could be made if more parking was available.
- Current parking arrangements are dangerous. Residents would benefit from the provision of a pub car park.
- Keen to return the single surviving pub into a thriving business, the applicants have invested time, thought and resources into this proposal. This will ensure the continuing existence of the General Elliot which is an essential part of village life.
- It is essential to have a safe off road parking area for the pub, so those using it can do so without restricting access for others.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 The main issues in this case are considered to be 1) whether the proposal is an appropriate form of development in the Oxford Green Belt and if it is not, whether there are any very special circumstances that justify the development, 2) the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, 3) the impact of the

proposal on neighbouring properties, 4) the safety of the access and parking arrangements and 5) flood risk issues.

- 5.2 On the first issue, Local Plan Policy GS3 sets out the Council's general presumption against inappropriate development in the Oxford Green Belt. This can include engineering and other operations and changing the use of the land. Paragraph 3.12 of PPG2 confirms that such development is inappropriate unless it maintains openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. Your Officers consider that the proposed car park would affect the openness of the Green Belt and it would not assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (i.e. one of the purposes of including land in the Green Belt). The proposal, therefore, is inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 5.3 It is therefore necessary to consider whether there are any very special circumstances that could justify the proposed development.
- 5.4 The General Elliot is the only public house in the village. As such, it is a vital community facility and, in your Officers' opinion, is a material consideration to be afforded significant weight.
- 5.5 The applicants, in their supporting statement, state that the public house is not viable in its current form. Confidential trading statements have been submitted to show the current financial position of the pub, and these have been independently verified by an external consultant on behalf of the Council.
- 5.6 The consultant's report confirms that the pub is currently not viable without an adequate car park. Drawing on expertise from around the industry and from local knowledge of other premises, however, the consultant considers that the General Elliot could be viable with the provision of a car park along the size proposed. The consultant's report is attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 5.7 Your Officers consider, therefore, that the provision of the car park is essential to aid the viability of the pub, which is a very special circumstance to weigh against the Green Belt policy objection to the proposal.
- 5.8 Regarding the second issue, the car park will be visible from the general locality, but, subject to appropriate landscaping and surfacing materials, it will not be visually harmful.
- 5.9 Turning to the third issue, the impact upon neighbouring properties, it is considered that no undue harm would be caused to those properties in Manor Road. Vehicles currently come and go to the premises, and it is considered that any increase in traffic movements will not cause any significant noise and disturbance to warrant refusal on such grounds. It is also expected that residents will actually benefit from this proposal in removing the existing on street parking by pub customers that it understood to frequently occur.
- 5.10 The proposed access and parking arrangements are considered acceptable. Adequate visibility can be achieved at the proposed access point onto Manor Road to ensure pedestrian and vehicle safety, and the increase in traffic movements is not considered to be sufficiently harmful to users of the local footpath / cycle network. Your Officers, therefore, see no requirement to relocate the entrance through the

pub's existing grounds. Furthermore, the County Engineer raises no objection to the proposal as submitted, subject to the requirements outlined in section 4 above.

5.11 Regarding the issue of flooding, the use is not considered to lead to increased risk of impeding flood flows or storage capacity, and will not lead to an increase in flooding elsewhere. It is suggested however, that in the interest of avoiding excessive surface water run-off, that a condition requiring the surface to be permeable is imposed on any permission granted.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL1 Time Limit*
2. *Submission of sample surface materials, and method of construction of car park to be submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority.*
3. *RE7 Submission of boundary treatments*
4. *LS2 Submission of landscaping scheme*
5. *HY3 Access in accordance with specified plan*
6. *HY22 Gates*
7. *Prior to the commencement of development a scheme for traffic calming measures along the length of Manor Road from the General Elliot's existing entrance to the proposed new car park access shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of a rumble strip at the highway boundary at the point of the car park access, and suitable signage on Manor Road warning road users of vehicles / pedestrians using the highway. Prior to the first use of the car park hereby permitted, the approved scheme shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with the approved details, and thereafter shall be permanently maintained as such.*