

**ABG/8678/7 and ABG/8678/8-LB – Edgestone Homes  
Conversion and extension of existing frontage building to provide 2 x 2 bed flats. Demolition of industrial buildings at rear and redevelopment to provide 6 x 2 bed dwellings including undercroft car parking and storage.  
54 Ock Street, Abingdon, OX14 5DE**

**1.0 The Proposal**

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the conversion and extension of the former Leach's Printers building, which is Grade II listed, to 2 flats, and the demolition of the existing industrial buildings to the rear to be replaced with a terrace of 5 x 2 bed dwellings and a detached 2 bed unit with associated parking and amenity space.
- 1.2 The site, located on the south side of Ock Street, is a narrow linear site that measures between 8 and 10m in width running southwards towards the River Ock. To the east lies the brewery development, with one of the communal car parks serving that development adjoining the site's boundary. To the west lies the Post Office depot.
- 1.3 The conversion of the existing frontage building will provide 2 x 2 bed flats. The new buildings to the rear, providing 6 x 2 dwellings, are of a contemporary design, using modern materials and incorporating projecting flat roofed dormers, private balconies and courtyards, rendered panels and cedar boarding. The proposal will utilise the existing underpass access directly off Ock Street, and provides 1 parking space for each dwelling. Due to the narrowness of the site the scheme proposes a passing bay near the front of the site and a vehicle turntable to the rear to enable vehicles to leave the site in a forward gear.
- 1.4 A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, its design and layout together with extracts from the design and access statement are attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.5 The application comes to Committee because Abingdon Town Council objects to the proposal.

**2.0 Planning History**

- 2.1 Previous history relates to the former printing use of the site, with various alterations and extensions dating from the 1960s to the 1980s. In November 1997, permission was granted for the erection of a 2 storey extension building to the existing workshop which was constructed to the rear of the site. Further alterations were approved in 1998.
- 2.2 Leach's Printers vacated the site in June 2008 and have relocated to the Nuffield Business Park.

**3.0 Planning Policies**

- 3.1 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011*  
Policy GS5 (making efficient use of land and buildings) seeks to promote the efficient re-use of previously developed / unused land and buildings within settlements (provided there is no conflict with other policies in the Local Plan).

- 3.2 Policy H10 (development in the five main settlements) enables new housing development within the built-up area of Abingdon, provided it makes efficient use of land, the layout, mass and design of the dwellings would not harm the character of the area and it does not involve the loss of facilities important to the local community (i.e. informal public open space).
- 3.3 Policy H15 (housing densities) seeks net residential densities of at least 50 dwellings per hectare in the town centre, provided there would be no harm to the character of the surrounding area or the amenities of adjoining properties.
- 3.4 Policies DC1, DC5, DC6, DC8, DC9, DC13, and DC14 (quality of new development) 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; suitable social and physical infrastructure exists for the development or can be provided; the development is acceptable in terms of highway safety, will not increase the risk of flooding and will not result in adverse surface water run-off.
- 3.5 Policy HE4 (historic buildings) states that development will not be permitted unless it can be shown that the siting, scale, design, form, finishes and materials of the proposal respect the characteristics of the listed building in its setting, including any visual, functional, historic or architectural relationships.
- 3.6 Policy HE5 (alterations to historic buildings) states that development involving alterations (including partial demolition or extensions to a listed building) will not be permitted if its siting, design, scale, form, finishes and materials are unsympathetic to the building's special architectural or historic interest, or it fails to retain those features of the existing building which contribute to its special architectural or historic interest.
- 3.7 Policy S10 states that within the Ock Street Policy Area, proposals which lead to environmental improvements will be permitted, but proposals which have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the Ock Street approach to the town centre will be refused.
- 3.8 Policy E10 seeks to protect key employment sites within the District, and identifies various sites. No 54 Ock Street is not one of them.
- 3.9 The following Planning Policy Statements are also relevant: PPS1 "Delivering Sustainable Development"; PPS3, "Housing"; PPG15 "Planning and the Historic Environment" and PPS25 "Development and Flood Risk".

#### 4.0 **Consultations**

- 4.1 Abingdon Town Council objects to the proposal stating "Entry onto the site for vehicles is tight and does not allow for 2 way traffic. This will in turn cause delays in Ock Street. Backing out onto the main road (Ock Street) would be dangerous. The Town Council has serious concerns on this vehicle access".
- 4.2 County Engineer – Ock Street (A415) is a very busy classified road, close to Abingdon town centre, and becomes congested at peak times. Several bus routes use Ock Street, and there are cycle lanes in both directions along the road. The proposal will replace the previous Leach's Printers with 8 residential units. Daily traffic movements are projected to reduce from the previous (Printers) 60 business trips to/from the site to 16-32 residential trips. Hence the impact on road traffic will be reduced, not

intensified. The vehicle turntable dimensions shown are sufficient to allow cars to turn through 180 degrees onsite. All vehicles are required to egress in forward gear onto Ock Street in the interests of highway safety. 8 car parking spaces and 16 cycle parking spaces are proposed and are appropriate for the scale of the development and its proximity to Abingdon town centre. A financial contribution is requested towards Abingdon's Integrated Transport Strategy.

- 4.3 Conservation Officer – “This is an interesting and attractive scheme that I do not consider will have any adverse impact on the listed building. The success of the scheme will be dependent on the quality of the materials and detailing which need to be scrupulously controlled by conditions.”
- 4.4 Drainage Engineer – “No flooding was reported on this property in July 2007. The Flood risk assessment (FRA) would appear to be acceptable, but will need to be approved by the Environment Agency”.
- 4.5 Environment Agency – “We have reviewed the FRA and find it to be satisfactory and therefore have no objections to the proposed development”.
- 4.6 Environmental Health – no objections, subject to contaminated land condition.
- 4.7 Waste Management Team – no objections.
- 4.8 County Archaeological Officer – no objections, subject to archaeological watching brief condition.
- 4.9 Consultant Architect – comments attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 4.10 Architects Panel – “Enterprising and innovative scheme”.
- 4.11 2 letters of comment have been received which are summarised as follows:
- We support the change of use of this site from B2 industrial to residential use as a continued B2 use would be unacceptable to local residents.
  - If sensitively carried out, this development will improve the general amenity of the area, reducing noise and traffic flow.
  - The retention of the frontage building is to be applauded.
  - The modern design shows imagination and complements the area, adding aesthetic appeal to the site.
  - The demolition of the buildings to the rear would be an improvement and the conversion of the existing frontage building should be an improvement to Ock Street in line with Policy S10, but parking needs to be looked at carefully as it exits onto a busy section of the Town Centre approach.
- 4.12 2 letters of objection have been received, which are summarised as follows:
- 8 x 2 bed dwellings are too many for this area due to the current traffic problems in Ock Street. It is difficult to exit Coopers Lane and new dwellings will only add to this congestion.
  - The proposed development will overlook neighbouring dwellings and gardens.
  - The proposed building is much higher than the existing structure and will be over-dominant.
  - The car parking provision of 1 space per unit is inadequate.

- The design of the building is unsympathetic to surrounding buildings.
- The density is too high.

## 5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 The main issues in this case are considered to be 1) the principle of the development in this location; 2) the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including its design; 3) its impact on the listed building; 4) the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties; 5) the safety of the access and parking arrangements and 6) flooding issues.
- 5.2 On the first issue, the site is currently a vacant B2 industrial site. Due to the narrow nature of the site and its close proximity to dwellings in the adjacent Brewery development, its reuse for such purposes is likely to be detrimental to residential amenity. For example, the existing buildings are not acoustically attenuated, and the site lacks sufficient parking and servicing facilities for B2 uses. Furthermore, there is adequate B2 accommodation within Abingdon on the Abingdon Business Park. As such 54 Ock Street is not a key employment site identified under Policy E10.
- 5.3 As PPS 3 'Housing' makes it a priority to use previously developed land for new housing and encourages the use of innovative approaches to achieve higher densities within existing settlements, the reuse of this site for residential purposes in the manner proposed is considered an acceptable and appropriate form of development in this location. The proposal also reuses an important listed building.
- 5.4 Regarding the second issue, the development in the form proposed is not considered to be harmful to the character of the locality. The existing traditional building fronting Ock Street, which is Grade II listed, is retained. Whilst the buildings to the rear are technically curtilage listed, they are not considered to be of sufficient interest or quality to warrant retention.
- 5.5 The design of the rear buildings is unashamedly modern, with the use of rendered panels, balconies, projecting features and cedar boarding. The new dwellings have also been designed with energy conservation measures. The design is clearly different to the more traditional housing often found in this part of Abingdon but this, in itself, does not make the proposal harmful. The Consultant Architect has commented that "this is one of the most ingenious proposals to be offered to the Council for many years". The Architects Panel also positively endorses the scheme, stating that it is "enterprising and innovative". Your Officers consider that the contemporary design is exciting and wholly acceptable and, as such, there would be no justification for a design based refusal.
- 5.6 The scheme has a density in excess of 40 dwellings per hectare, which accords with Policy H15. There is on site communal garden space for use by occupants of the dwellings, in addition to private balconies and courtyards on the main terrace building. Officers consider that the proposal is not an overdevelopment of the site.
- 5.7 Turning to the third issue, the proposed alterations to the listed building are considered acceptable, preserving and enhancing both the historic and architectural fabric. The scheme will also remove some inappropriate and unsightly 1960's utilitarian additions to the rear of the listed building, which will improve its appearance and setting. The new buildings proposed to the rear are not considered to adversely affect the setting of the frontage listed building.

- 5.8 In terms of the impact on neighbouring properties, it is considered that no undue harm would be caused to those properties adjoining the site. A distance of at least 21m is attained between buildings. Whilst windows will overlook the car parking areas and some private gardens of the Brewery site development, this is not considered unduly harmful, given the town centre location where amenity standards are often less than one can expect in a more suburban location. Existing properties for example already have a degree of mutual overlooking of garden areas, and any additional overlooking resulting from this scheme is not considered to be sufficiently harmful to warrant refusal. Your Officers are also satisfied that the proposed units would not be demonstrably harmed by the activities on the adjacent post office depot, which happily co-exists with existing residential properties in the Brewery site. Whilst the outdoor courtyard areas will be closer to this site, the boundary walls are sufficiently high to provide adequate protection.
- 5.9 On the issue of parking and access, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable. The residential use generates much less traffic when compared to a B2 use. On site parking provides 1 space for each unit, which is acceptable in this town centre location. Adequate visibility can be achieved at the existing access to ensure pedestrian and highway safety and the proposed turning arrangements are considered acceptable. Consequently, the County Engineer has no objections to the proposal. Officers, therefore, can see no reason to withhold permission on highway safety grounds as suggested by the Town Council.
- 5.10 The site lies within the flood plain of the River Ock. However, the Flood Risk Assessment has confirmed the site did not flood last summer and the proposed mitigation measures are deemed acceptable by the Environment Agency. Furthermore, the new residential units have been designed with minimal facilities and no living accommodation on the ground floor. Consequently the development is considered acceptable in flood risk terms and so complies with Policy DC13.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

- 6.1 *That authority to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair in order to enable the completion of a S106 Agreement to secure the required financial contribution for highways and social infrastructure.*
1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
  2. *MC2 – Sample Materials*
  3. *LS2 – Landscaping*
  4. *RE7 – Boundary details*
  5. *Access in accordance with specified plan*
  6. *Car parking layout in accordance with specified plan*
  7. *Bin storage, vehicle turntable and cycle parking to be constructed prior to first occupation.*

6.2 *That Listed Building Consent is granted subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL4 – Time Limit*
2. *MC2 – Sample Materials*
3. *CN8 – Details of acoustic insulation, thermal insulation and fire protection to be submitted and approved.*