

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6 October 2010

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)/Corporate Manager
(Planning and New Communities)

S/1190/10/F – SAWSTON

**Change of Use from Offices to Residential & Roof Extension to Create Four Apartments
for Murfet Group Ltd**

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 7 October 2010

Notes:

This application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the recommendation is contrary to the response of the Parish Council

Members will visit the site on 6 October 2010.

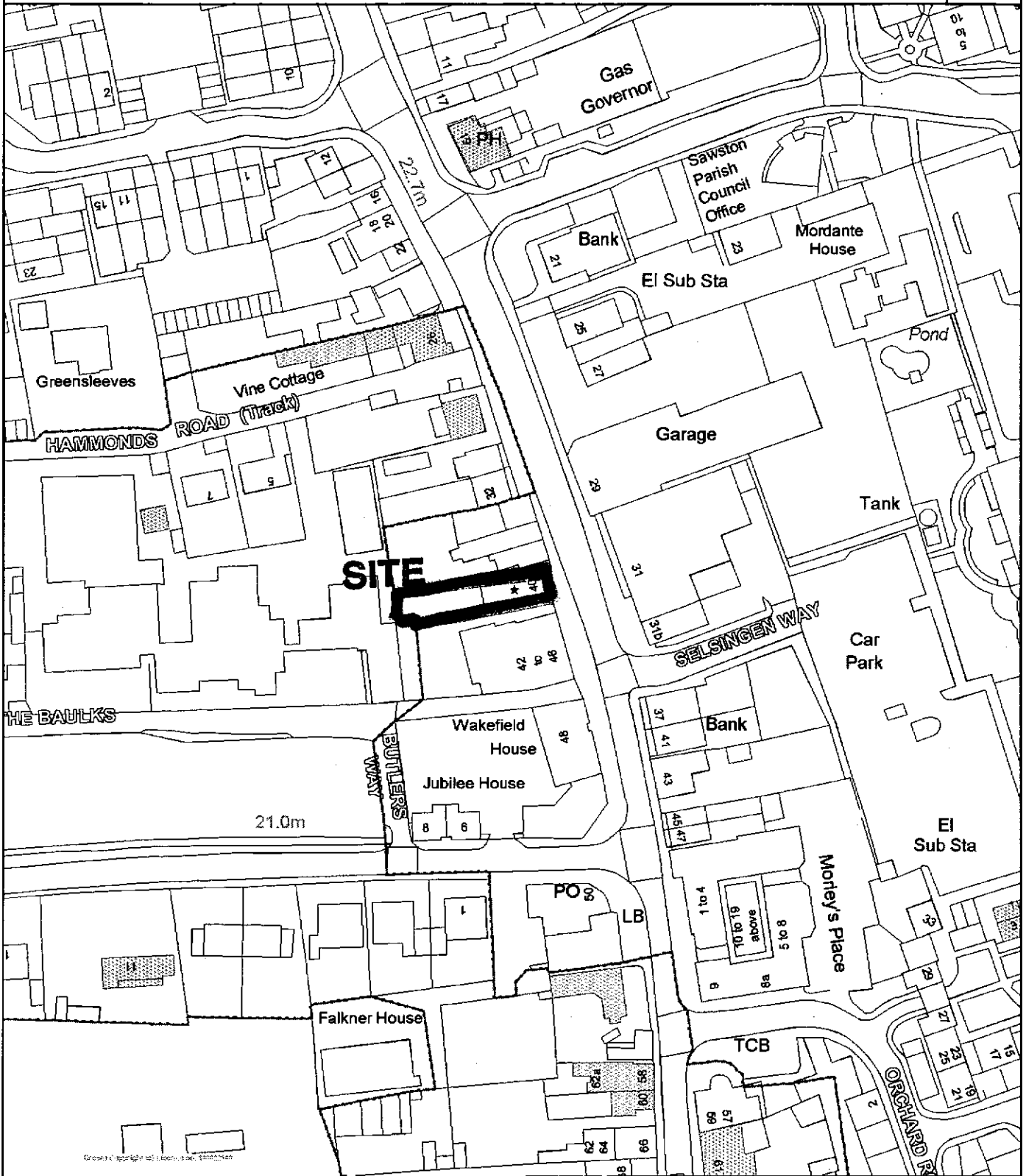
Site and Proposal

1. No.40A High Street is a two-storey building of linear plan, orange/buff brickwork and composite slate roof of hipped form located on the west side of Sawston High Street. The property houses a hair salon at ground floor and office space at first floor. The rear of the site is accessed through a coaching arch at ground floor level. The rear of the site is composed entirely of hardstanding providing undefined parking.
2. The full planning application, submitted on 12 August 2010, seeks to change the use of the first floor of the building and add an additional storey to form 4 apartment dwellings, comprising 3 x 1-bedroom flat/maisonettes and 1 x 2-bedroom flat. The High Street façade would increase in height by approximately 0.9m with a mansard roof proposed to replace the existing dual pitched and hipped roof form. Three additional windows would be added at second floor level to facilitate the proposed flats. The area to the rear of the site would be marked as a parking area for the flats resulting in the provision of 4 spaces. Access would be via the existing coaching arch and on site a mechanical turntable would be installed to facilitate turning. The density of the development equates to approximately 166 dph.
3. The statement accompanying the application explains that that the premises have been marketed as office space with Layer Chartered Surveyors and Commercial Estate Agents since September 2009. This has not resulted in any positive offers.

Planning History

4. **S/1552/97/F** – Two-storey Rear Extension to Shop and Hairdressers – Approved
5. **S/12459/88/F** – Use for Hairdressing Salon – Approved
6. **S/1025/88/F** – Shop with Offices Above – Approved
7. **S/1223/87/O** – Shop & Offices with Associated Parking – Approved

S/1190/10/F - 40A High Street, Sawston



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Scale 1/1250 Date 24/9/2010
Centre = 548609 E 249437 N

Planning Policy

8. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007: Policy ST/4 – Rural Centres**
9. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007:**
 - DP/1 – Sustainable Development**
 - DP/2 – Design of New Development**
 - DP/3 - Development Criteria**
 - DP/4 – Infrastructure and New Developments**
 - HG/1 – Housing Density**
 - HG/2 – Housing Mix**
 - HG/3 – Affordable Housing**
 - ET/6 – Loss of Employment to Non-Employment Uses**
 - TR/1 – Promoting sustainable Forms of Transport**
 - TR/2 – Car and Cycle Parking Standards**

Consultations

10. **Sawston Parish Council** - Objects to the application, stating:
 - (a) Out of keeping with street scene
 - (b) Traffic over footpath
 - (c) Parking
11. **Conservation Officer** – Objects to the proposed development commenting that the proposed design would affect the setting of the nearby Conservation Area.
12. **Local Highways Authority** - Raise no objection to the proposals but recommend that a condition be applied to ensure that the mechanical turntable is installed and functioning prior to occupation of the units and thereafter maintained.
13. **Housing Enabling Manager** – This application provides for 4 units, two of which are required to be affordable. The applicant makes reference in their application that they have only received contact from one RSL regarding the acquisition of units on site. In the current climate it is unlikely that an RSL would take on these units, as in order to make them viable they would require grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, which at the moment is very unlikely to be forthcoming. The applicant has requested that we seek a commuted sum valuation as their affordable housing contribution, which is currently being undertaken. Once the valuation report is completed it will be made available to the applicant for further consideration.
14. **Environmental Operation Manager** – Any comments will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Representations

15. No letters of representation have been received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

16. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
 - Loss of employment/principle of converting the building to residential use;
 - Highway safety and parking issues;

- Impact upon the character of the nearby Conservation Area
- Infrastructure contributions

Loss of Employment Use/Principle of Residential Use

17. This application has been accompanied by information demonstrating that the property has been marketed with an agency as a commercial concern for the minimum 12-month period. The log of activity submitted by the agent shows that whilst there was some informal interest in the commercial lease of the property, no enquiry came to fruition. The application also states that the site was marketed by the applicants through their own company unsuccessfully for a period of 4 months prior to the 12 month period through a commercial agent.
18. It is considered that the property has been adequately marketed for the required period on terms that reflect its lawful use. As such, there are no objections in principle to the conversion of the building to form residential accommodation.
19. Sawston is classified as a Rural Centre, where the principal of residential development (with no limit on maximum scheme size) is acceptable. The proposal seeks to provide 4 small units (1 and 2 bed) at a density of approximately 166 dph, thereby complying with the requirements of Policies HG/1 and HG/2 of the 2007 Local Development Framework.
20. With regards to Policy HG/3 of the Local Development Framework, evidence has been submitted to accompany the application, which shows that at least three registered providers in the area have been approached and are not willing to take on management of affordable units of this form in this location. The Housing Enabling Manager has been consulted in respect of the issue of affordable housing and considers that in the current climate it is unlikely that an RSL would take on these units, as in order to make them viable they would require grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, which at the moment is very unlikely to be forthcoming. The Housing Needs Survey for Sawston identifies a need for 1 and 2-bedroom affordable units and the applicants have confirmed in writing that they would be willing to provide a commuted sum for the provision of affordable units elsewhere in the area. This is in accordance with the requirements of Policy HG/3.

Highway Safety/Parking Issues

21. The Parish Council has raised concerns on parking and highway safety grounds.
22. The application proposes to provide 4 off-street parking spaces for the 4 dwellings. This represents a ratio of 1 resident space and no visitor space per unit. This is less than the maximum parking standards, which seek a maximum average of 1.5 spaces per unit. However in this instance the units proposed are very small, a majority being one-bedroom units, hence it is reasonable to anticipate single occupants in the majority of the units.
23. Furthermore the site is centrally located within one of the more sustainable settlements in the district and is within short walking distance of many amenities, facilities and public transport links. In such locations sustainable modes of transport should be promoted through the avoidance of unnecessary overprovision for the private motorcar and suitable provision for alternate forms of transport. In this instance secure and covered cycle stores are proposed as part of the development.
24. The Parish Council raises concerns for vehicles crossing the public footpath. However these concerns are not considered to be a sustainable reason for refusal in this instance as the vehicular access to and from the site is existing and has adequate visibility.

25. Existing parking provision is stated as being four spaces. In accordance with the councils maximum parking standards the existing offices would require approximately 3 spaces, which leaves a single space for the salon use at ground floor. Customer parking for the salon is therefore provided by the general public parking in the area and would thus not be displaced by the proposed change in use. There is a large public car park (approx 93 spaces) on the opposite site of High Street to the application site, which could accommodate the displacement of staff parking from the salon.
26. By virtue of the fact that there is no material increase in the number of parking spaces provided on site there is no potential for maximum intensity to increase with the proposed change in use. However, the proposed mechanical turntable and reduction in width of the coach arch access will dissuade vehicles from reversing out of the site, which is potentially dangerous. Therefore the proposals are considered to enhance highway safety in this instance.

Visual Impact

27. The existing building is of little merit and is not considered to contribute to the character and appearance of the street scene.
28. It is proposed to increase the height of the existing building by approximately 0.9m with a resultant change in roof form from hipped to a flat roof with a sloping pitch on the street fronting roof slope.
29. Objections have been received from the Conservation Officer that suggest that proposed increase in height will raise the structure above the height of neighbouring development. However in reality the existing building is lower than much of the surrounding two-storey development. To this end the proposed increase in height of 0.9m is not considered to significantly raise the height of the building to such an extent that it would appear incongruous within the street scene.
30. The Conservation Officer and Parish Council also consider that the proposed roof form is out of keeping with the character of development in the area. The pitched form of the street fronting roof slope is considered to appear coherent in the context of the surrounding dual-pitched roof forms. The flat roof form that is proposed to extend towards the rear of the building would not have significant visual prominence due to the screening afforded by adjacent buildings, especially when viewed from pedestrian level within the High Street.
31. The Conservation Area boundary lies along the west (rear) of the site and beyond other buildings to the north and south along High Street. By virtue of the relatively dense urban character of the area no prominent views of no.40A are afforded from within the Conservation Area on High Street to the south, Mill Lane to the west nor Hammonds Road to the North. To this end the proposed development is not considered to have a significant visual impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Infrastructure Contributions

32. The applicants are prepared to pay the infrastructure contributions in relation to open space, community facilities and waste receptacles and they understand that these would be secured through schemes by way of condition.

Recommendation

33. Approve (as amended plans stamped 17 September 2010), subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. **The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.**
(Reason - To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development, which have not been acted upon.)
2. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 937-04 rev A, 937-05 rev A and 937-01.**
(Reason – To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)
3. **No development shall commence until samples of materials to be used for the external walls and roofs of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**
(Reason – To ensure that the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area.)
4. **No development shall begin until details of a scheme for the provision of openspace infrastructure to meet the needs of the development in accordance with adopted Local Development Framework Policies DP/4 and SF/10 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include a timetable for the provision to be made and shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**
(Reason - To ensure that the development contributes towards open space in accordance with Policy SF/10 and Policy DP/4 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)
5. **No development shall begin until details of a scheme for the provision of community facilities and waste receptacles to meet the needs of the development in accordance with adopted Local Development Framework Policy DP/4 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include a timetable for the provision to be made and shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**
(Reason – To ensure that the development contributes towards outdoor play space and informal open space in accordance with Policy DP/4 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)
6. **No development shall begin until details of a scheme for the provision of affordable housing infrastructure to meet the needs of the development in accordance with adopted Local Development Framework Policy HG/3 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include a timetable for the provision to be made and shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**
(Reason - To ensure that the development contributes towards affordable housing in accordance with the above-mentioned Policy HG/3 and Policy DP/4 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

7. **Prior to the occupation of the residential units hereby approved the proposed mechanical turntable and entrance width reduction shall be installed and free from any obstruction that would prevent a domestic vehicle from being able to manoeuvre with ease. The mechanical turntable shall thereafter be permanently maintained in working order.**
(Reason – In the interests of satisfactory development and highway safety.)
8. **Prior to the occupation of the residential units, hereby approved, the permanent space to be reserved on the site for parking in accordance with the layout as illustrated on drg. no; 937-01 shall be clearly marked out on the hardstanding and thereafter maintained.**
(Reason – in the interest of highway safety.)

Informatives

1. With regard to condition 4 above, the provision of recreational infrastructure to meet the needs of the development, in accordance with policies DP/4 and SF/10 of the South Cambridgeshire Local development Framework, Development Control Policies DPD, 2007 amounts to a financial contribution of £4476.36 (index-linked) as calculated at the date of this decision. The applicant has agreed to enter negotiations with regard to such a contribution and a document under S106 (Scheme) is required to secure this.
2. With regard to condition 5 above, the provision of community facility infrastructure to meet the needs of the development, in accordance with policy DP/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local development Framework, Development Control Policies DPD, 2007 amounts to a financial contribution of £1249,71 (index-linked) as calculated at the date of this decision. The applicant has agreed to enter negotiations with regard to such a contribution and a document under S106 (Scheme) is required to secure this.

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
 - (a) South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007: Core Strategy:
ST/4 (Rural Centres)
 - (b) South Cambridgeshire local Development Framework 2007: Development Control Policies DPD:
DP/1 (sustainable Development)
DP/2 (Design of New Development)
DP/3 (Development Criteria)
HG/1 (Housing Density)
HG/2 (Housing Mix)
HG/3 (Affordable Housing)
TR/1 (Planning for more Sustainable Travel)
TR/2 (Car and Cycle Parking Standards)
ET/6 (Loss of Rural Employment to Non-Employment Uses)
2. The proposal is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations, which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - **Parking and highway safety**
 - **Visual impact**
 - **Impact on the Conservation Area**

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007
- Affordable Housing SPD – Adopted March 2010
- Open Space in New Developments SPD – Adopted January 2009

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