

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

A Special Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 1st July 2015 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Chris Hill presided; also present were Cllrs. Claire Andersson, Val Howells, Mike Rimmer, Keith Russell and Mark Williams (Vice-Chairman) with G Russell in attendance. Also present for part of the time were four residents.

1 Apologies for Absence Received

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Sue Graney

2 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Claire Andersson said that, depending upon future developments, Overy Court is somewhere in which she might have an interest as a business location. She would therefore take no part in the decision about Planning Application P15/S1496/FUL

3 Public Participation

John Taylor of Overy Manor said that he had already written to the Planning Officer recommending refusal. He believes that the removal of condition 3 would provide the owners (current and future) with the opportunity to make a significant change to the use of Overy Court which would have a permanent impact upon the unique character of Overy. This would fail 'to safeguard the character and residential amenity of the locality' as stipulated in the January 1992 grant of planning permission. This was enshrined in the Conservation Area documents which were approved by South Oxfordshire District Council in September 2004. Tracy Dilks from Overy Paddock said that, as the immediate neighbour of Overy Court, she had a keen interest in its future use, particularly if any changes were to have an impact upon the privacy, security and amenities of her dwelling. However she was also interested in what would be best for Overy and, although an increase in traffic along Overy Lane would have little impact upon her, she wished to stress that the Lane, which is narrow and has no pavement, is much used by walkers, dog-owners etc. and any increase in traffic which might be a consequence of a change of use at Overy Court would provide a threat to the safety of such users.

The possibility that traffic along Overy Lane would increase was also of concern to Mr and Mrs Davis of Overy House. All this traffic would pass their house. Mr Davis said that they would prefer that if Overy Court is not suitable for its present use as conventional offices it should be converted for use as a dwelling.

4 Planning Application Received

P15/S1496/FUL Overy Court Overy

Removal of condition 3 (use as offices) of planning permission P91/W0698. Change of use of existing buildings from studio offices to B1(a) office use, to include present restricted studio office use.

The Council had received a letter from AKT Planning+Architecture, agents for the Applicant, in support of this application, which states that the removal of the condition would not change the authorised use of the building as an office.

The agents' letter states that the Condition, which was imposed in 1991, is considered to be unjustified and overly restrictive in today's planning climate; that its removal would not harm the character or residential amenity of the locality and that the condition inappropriately restricts the use of permitted development rights for the property.

The applicant has moved to Unipart House in Cowley and the premises are being marketed through a firm of Oxford commercial property consultants. Removing the condition would reduce the constraints upon the site and attract other occupiers who may wish to use the site for other (non-office) commercial use (for which planning permission may still be required). This could, for example, include uses such as storage, children's day nursery, physiotherapy clinic etc. A number of viewers of the property have expressed an interest in developing the property.

The agents conclude "there is no justifiable need for the condition and the removal of the condition will not result in harm to character or amenity of the area."

The Council has also received a letter from Mark Stevenson who had represented the Council when a previous planning application for Overy Court (P13/S3201/FUL) had been discussed by the Planning Committee. This was for the change of use of the barn from B1 (office) to C3 (dwelling). In Mark Stevenson's opinion the removal of condition (3) would result in the owner being allowed, under Permitted Development Rights, to convert the offices to residential use. He said that if the Parish Council consider that maintaining the building as a working space is important to the character of the Conservation Area then that would be a counter argument and grounds for retaining the condition. The Parish Council could explain that historically Overy has always included a working area and the character of an area is not solely determined by the appearance of buildings but also by their use.

Cllr Keith Russell proposed that the Council recommend that the application should be refused and this was seconded by Cllr Mark Williams. The continued use of the building as offices is much preferred against the other potential uses that have been described by the applicant's agent. The motion was supported by five members with none against. Cllr Claire Andersson abstained.

5 Any Other Business

a, The Clerk said that the Council has been invited by The Earth Trust to attend the Presentation of The Wittenham Rose at 10.45 a.m. on Friday 10th July. Cllr Val Howells said that she would like to go and she was handed the invitation.

b. County Council review of subsidised bus services; there is a briefing meeting at Didcot Civic Centre on the afternoon of Monday, 6th July. Malcolm Corry has said that he will definitely attend and he has been asked to come to the Parish Council meeting on 8th July to report.

The Meeting closed at 8.26 p.m.