

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

DATE: **22ND JULY 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT)**

SUBJECT: **FULL APPLICATION – CONVERSION OF COMMERCIAL UNITS INTO 4 NO. DWELLINGS AT THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE, MAIN ROAD, HIGHER KINNERTON.**

APPLICATION NUMBER: **053004**

APPLICANT: **MR. S. MEARS**

SITE: **THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE, MAIN ROAD, HIGHER KINNERTON.**

APPLICATION VALID DATE: **17TH DECEMBER 2014**

LOCAL MEMBERS: **COUNCILLOR P. LIGHTFOOT**

TOWN/COMMUNITY COUNCIL: **HIGHER KINNERTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

REASON FOR COMMITTEE: **REQUIREMENT FOR LEGAL OBLIGATION TO CONTROL OCCUPANCY OF UNITS.**

SITE VISIT: **NO.**

1.00 SUMMARY

- 1.01 This full application proposes the conversion of former offices at The Old School, Higher Kinnerton into 4 No. 2 bedroom dwelling units.
- 1.02 For Members information, the offices have remained vacant since relocation of the company that previously occupied the building to alternative/larger premises.

2.00 RECOMMENDATION: TO GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:-

2.01 That conditional planning permission be granted subject to the applicant entering into:-

- a) A Section 106 Obligation/Unilateral Undertaking to ensure that the units are offered for sale or rent to meet affordable local housing needs.
- b) A section 106 Obligation/Unilateral Undertaking or advance payment of £733 per unit towards the maintenance and enhancement of open space in the locality.

Conditions

1. Time limit on commencement.
2. In accordance with approved plans.
3. Foul/surface water to be drained separately.
4. No land drainage to discharge into public sewerage system.
5. No net increase of surface water to connect into public sewerage system.
6. Where existing openings are proposed to be blocked up - materials to match existing.

3.00 CONSULTATIONS

3.01 Local Member
Councillor P. Lightfoot
No response received.

Higher Kinnerton Community Council
No objections.

Head of Pollution Control
No adverse comments.

Public Open Spaces Manager
Request the payment of £733 per dwelling in lieu of on-site Public Open Space, in order to improve existing facilities in the locality.

Highways Development Control Manager
Following the receipt of an amended site plan, no objection and do not intend to make a recommendation on highway grounds.

Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water
Request that any permission includes conditions in respect of foul, surface and land drainage.

4.00 PUBLICITY

- 4.01 Site Notice, Neighbour Notification
No responses received.

5.00 SITE HISTORY

- 5.01 **96/2/00981** – Change of use to graphic design and reprographics studio.

052100 – Change of use to child day care nursery – Permitted
18th June 2014.

6.00 PLANNING POLICIES

- 6.01 Flintshire Unitary Development Plan
Policy STR4 – Housing.
Policy GEN1 – General Requirements for Development.
Policy GEN2 – Development Inside Settlement Boundaries.
Policy D2 – Location & Layout.
Policy AC13 – Access & Traffic Impact.
Policy AC18 – Parking Provision & New Development.
Policy HSG3 – Housing on Unallocated Sites Within Settlement Boundaries.
Policy HSG8 – Density of Development.
Policy EM6 – Protection of Employment Land.

Additional Guidance

Local Planning Guidance Note 2 – Space Around Dwellings.
Local Planning Guidance Note 11 – Parking Standards.

7.00 PLANNING APPRAISAL

- 7.01 Introduction

The building the subject of this application is located on the western side of Main Road, Higher Kinnerton at the junction with Park Avenue and The Orchard. It is a large converted former school which has subsequently been used as an office. It currently stands vacant and is located within the settlement boundary of Higher Kinnerton as defined in the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan.

- 7.02 Proposed Development

The building measures approximately 25 m x 14 m x 7.5 m (high) and is constructed having facing brick external walls and a slate roof. It is proposed that the building which has the main frontage onto Park Avenue is converted into 4 No. 2 bed dwelling units, with minimal alterations proposed to the external appearance to facilitate its conversion into residential use. These alterations principally incorporate the blocking up of existing openings and installation of

traditional windows reflecting the form/pattern of the existing building.

- 7.03 Vehicular access to serve the development is proposed from Park Avenue, with parking space for 8 No. vehicles provided within the site curtilage.

7.04 Planning Policy

For Members information, the site is located within the settlement boundary of Higher Kinnerton, which is a Category C settlement as defined in the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan. Policy HSG3 sets an upper growth ceiling of 10% over the 15 year Plan period and requires that all new dwellings, including conversions, are to meet a proven local need. The level of growth is monitored over the 15 year period commencing with the baseline data at 1st April 2000 and ending with survey data as at 1st April 2015. Although the growth level for Higher Kinnerton has exceeded the 10% ceiling, it is no longer possible to control growth levels beyond the 15 year monitoring period. The stipulation that additional dwellings must be to meet proven local needs remains in force.

- 7.05 It is therefore necessary for each application in a Category C settlement to be considered on its merits as to whether it is a sustainable location to accommodate the development proposed. Higher Kinnerton is considered to have a good range of facilities and services for a modestly sized settlement and also has good accessibility to nearby employment facilities. The sustainability of the settlement was also considered by the Unitary Development Plan Inspector who recommended that the UDP allocation be retained as part of the consideration of objections to the allocation. In this context, it is considered that Higher Kinnerton can sustainably accommodate the proposed development.

- 7.06 The applicant's agent is aware of this policy requirement and have advised that at this stage no decision has been made on whether the dwellings would be provided for sale or rent. The Council's Housing Strategy Unit has been consulted on the application and advised that there are 14 persons registered for affordable properties for sale and a further 14 registered seeking affordable rental property. This therefore confirms that there is an affordable housing need within the locality.

7.07 Principle of Residential Use

It is acknowledged that the previous use of the building has been as an office, with the applicant subsequently moving to larger premises. This has resulted in the property becoming vacant. The applicant has provided details of the marking of the premises since March 2012 for a further commercial use. Whilst permission was granted in June 2014 for the change of use of the building to a child day care nursery, it is understood that the prospective operator has decided not to proceed with the establishment of this facility on economic grounds.

- 7.08 In these circumstances it is considered that the applicant has sought to encourage the introduction of a further commercial use within the premises but his has proved to be unsuccessful. Whilst a previous office use has been lost from within Higher Kinnerton it is not considered having regard to Policy EM6 that this would lead to an unacceptable reduction in the supply and range of employment sites in the area.
- 7.09 It is therefore my view that the principle of the conversion of the building into residential use is acceptable and if Members are mindful to grant permission the development would be required to meet a local affordable housing need which would be controlled through a Section 106 Obligation. This would ensure that the units were provided for sale or rent at a discounted rate which would provide for an increase in and variety of tenures within Higher Kinnerton.
- 7.10 Impact on Character of Site/Surroundings
The proposed conversion would involve limited external alterations to the existing physical fabric of the building. It is my view that the changes which principally incorporate the blocking up of existing and creation of additional openings would help to retain and improve the character of the building at this location.
- 7.11 Adequacy of Access/Parking
Amended plans submitted as part of this application, illustrate the provision of 8 No. parking spaces accessed from Park Avenue to serve 4 No. dwellings proposed.
- 7.12 Consultation on the acceptability of the access and parking arrangements has been undertaken with the Highways Development Control Manager who raises no objection to the development as it would be in accord with Local Planning Guidance Note 11 - Parking standards.

8.00 CONCLUSION

- 8.01 It is considered that the conversion of the existing building on the scale proposed to meet an identified affordable local housing need within Higher Kinnerton is acceptable subject to the completion of a Section 106 Obligation to control occupancy and the tenure. There is no objection to the development from a highway perspective and I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.
- 8.02 In considering this planning application the Council has acted in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998 including Article 8 of the Convention and in a manner which is necessary in a democratic society in furtherance of the legitimate aims of the Act and the Convention.

LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Planning Application & Supporting Documents

National & Local Planning Policy

Responses to Consultation

Responses to Publicity

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