

## Development Control Committee

9 August 2016

16/00109/COU

**Change of use from public house to dwelling, The Blue Bell Inn, 90 High Street, Gretton,**

### Background

The Blue Bell Inn is a public house which is located on the High Street in the village of Gretton. The property is located within the Conservation Area with existing vehicular access from Kirby Road to the rear. The property is in the middle of a row of residential terraced cottages. Directly opposite the building is a Baptist Church, whilst directly to the rear are residential properties located on Kirby Road.

The public house is classified as a community facility for the purposes of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy 7) and the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 70). The proposal is therefore a departure from the development plan.

The application is being brought before Committee as the loss of a village facility is contrary to policy, and also due to the number of objections received by local residents.

### Description

This application seeks consent to change the use of the public house to a dwelling

### Site History

There is no relevant planning history

### Policies

Policy 7 & 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

National Planning Policy Framework

Planning Practice Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990

### Consultation

**Gretton Parish Council:** No objection.

**Environmental Services (Health Protection):** No objection

**Planning Policy:** No comments received

**Northamptonshire Highways:** No objection

**Corby Borough Council Property Services:** Observations – Pub was valued and for sale with a number of estate agents over a long period of time and ‘open to offers’. Annual accounts demonstrate limited to negative returns over this period. Premises is cramped and pub market is declining further.

### Advertisement/Representations

**Neighbour Letters** were sent on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016 to 1 & 3 Kirby Road, 86, 88, 92, 94 & 96 High Street and 3 Appleton Gardens.

**Site Notice** was posted on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016

**Notice** was printed in the Evening Telegraph on 31 March 2016

6 representations were received stating:

- Plays a significant role in the village community
- Asking price for pub was overly optimistic

- Landlord has little interest in running the pub

## **Report**

The Blue Bell Inn is a non-listed building located within the Gretton Conservation Area. The property is in the middle of a row of residential terraced cottages. Directly opposite the building is a Baptist Church, whilst directly to the rear are residential properties located on Kirby Road

The application site is located within the Gretton Conservation Area and therefore the Council is statutorily required to consider whether the application preserves and/or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### Principle of Development

One of the reasons the application is being brought to Committee is that if allowed, it would result in the loss of a public house, and this is contrary to the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy 7) and the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 70) which seek to protect village facilities and services, particularly where their loss would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.

Social changes in pub drinking have seen many public houses close across the country. Whilst for many years the Blue Bell Inn has operated as a public house on Gretton High Street, a once profitable market has gradually declined which has resulted to the Blue Bell Inn operating at a loss for a number of years.

The decision was made in 2011 by the owners to begin sell the Blue Bell Inn due to retirement. The owners entered into a contract with Meridian Estate Agents to market and sell the pub at a valuation of £350,000, however with the pub market declining further there were no offers and by 2013 the owner entered into a contract with RTA Property Agents. No offers were received.

In July 2014 the owner switched agents to Blacklee Smith who were unsuccessful in selling the pub. In October 2015 Murrays Estate Agents followed on and with a reduced price of £300,000 continue to be the agents at present.

The Blue Bell Inn has been marketed for in excess of 5 years and has been valued by professional agents. The applicant has confirmed that the property has always been 'open for offers' and as such it is deemed that the price was not intentionally 'rigged' or placed higher than what was achievable as stated in a number of representations. During the 5 year period there has been one offer received and accepted in February 2016 subject to the property securing change of use from an A4 Public House to a C3 Dwellinghouse.

During the process of this planning application the perspective buyer withdrew their offer in May 2016 and the pub remains for sale as an ongoing concern.

Extensive information for the 5 year marketing period has been provided by the applicant which clearly demonstrates that there has been a severe lack of interest with no offers by anyone to continue running the Blue Bell Inn as a public house. It should be noted that 5 years worth of marketing sufficiently demonstrates a prolonged marketing exercise and displays that the premises is unviable in its current use a public house and satisfies the requirements of Policy 7 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy by demonstrating that it is no longer viable.

It is regretful to lose a village facility such as a pub; however in this case it is clear that the building itself is a significant constraint with it essentially being a small mid terraced property with limited kitchen facilities. There is little to no scope for the pub to diversify and generate additional income by providing food. It is evident when looking through the profit and loss sheet that the business is not successful and has been operating at a loss for a number of years, contrary to representations that state that the public house is an essential part of the village community.

The village benefits from 2 other public houses (The Talbot and The Hatton Arms) along with the Gretton Sports and Social Club therefore the principle of losing the pub is acceptable in principle and would not be significantly harmful to the supply of public houses within the

village. It is noted that the Talbot gained planning permission for a change of use in 2015 (15/00282/COU) but to this date it is still operating as a public house.

Further to the public house facilities, Gretton has a good level of additional facilities for a village of its size; these include a shop, tea room, sports facilities and churches. It would therefore be unreasonable to require the retention of this unsuccessful public house.

#### Impact upon neighbouring amenity

The public house is located within a row of terraced cottages and is therefore in close proximity to adjacent residential buildings. The use of the site as a residential property rather than a public house is considered to be beneficial to the residential amenity of the adjacent occupiers due to the impacts that the current arrangements have on the neighbouring properties in accordance with Policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

#### Highways

The property fronts onto the High Street with vehicular access gained from Kirby Road to the rear. The applicant has demonstrated that a minimum of two vehicles can be parked off street and Northamptonshire Highways offer no objection to the scheme.

#### Impact on conservation area

The application site falls within the Conservation Area and occupies a prominent location in the High Street. The council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character of Conservation Areas. This proposal, in physical terms is purely for a change of use with no external alterations proposed. It is considered to preserve the Conservation Area and accord to the existing row of residential dwellings whilst having no significant impact upon this area of the street scene.

#### Conclusion

Following the submission of extensive marketing information and evidence which clearly demonstrates that the Blue Bell Inn is no longer a viable prospect, the change of use of the public house to a residential dwelling is deemed acceptable when viewed against the requirements contained within Policy 7 (c i) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, accordingly the recommendation is for approval.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve subject to conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than three years from the date of this permission.

**Reason:** To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

#### **REASON FOR APPROVAL:**

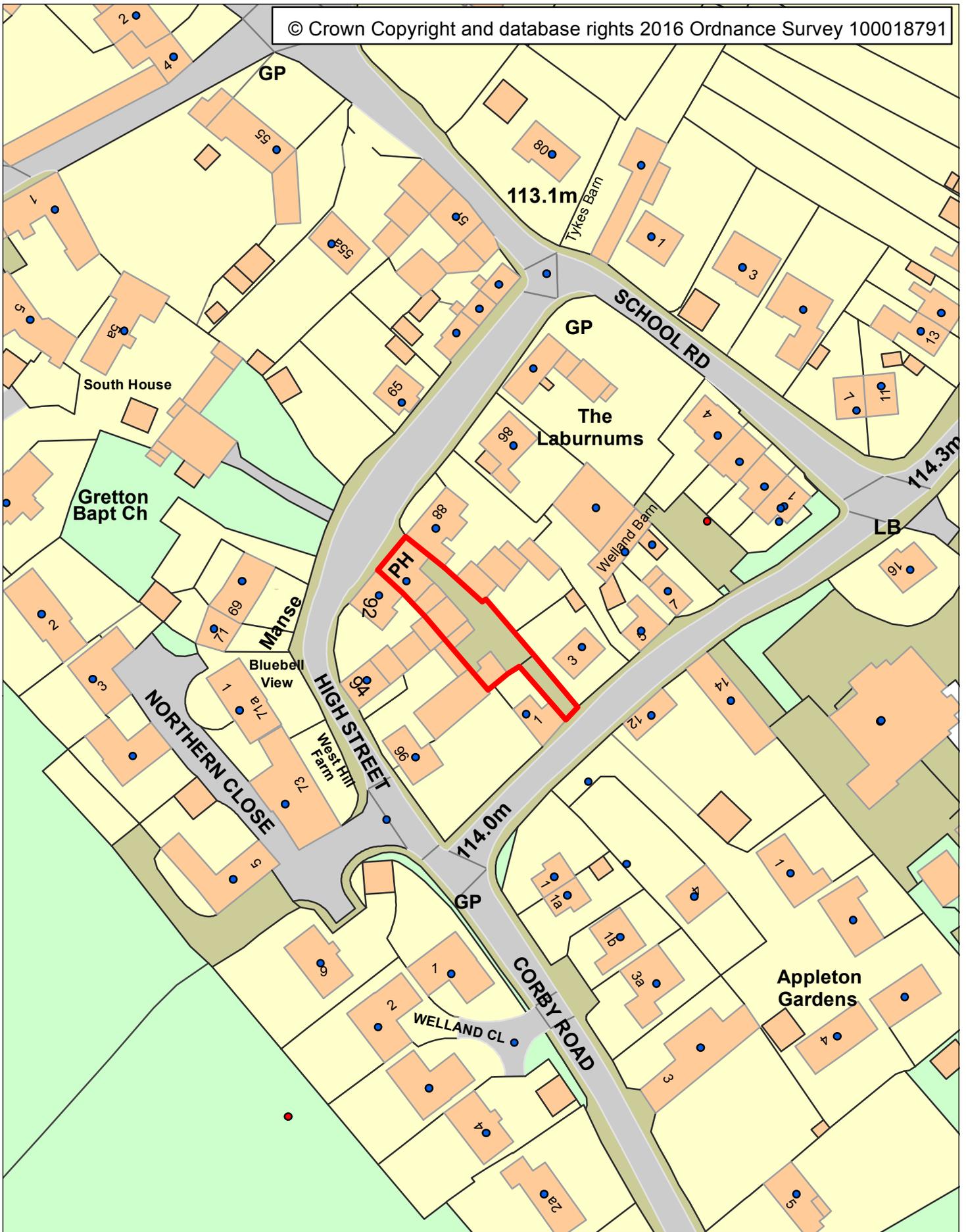
Subject to the condition above the proposed change of use is considered to preserve the Gretton Conservation Area and have a better relationship with the adjacent residential properties. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy 7 and 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance and requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

#### **STATEMENT OF APPLICANT INVOLVEMENT:**

During the application process additional financial and marketing information was requested and provided by the applicant.

#### **Officers to contact:**

Peter Baish



**LOCATION PLAN 16/00109/COU**  
**The Blue Bell Inn 90 High Street**  
**Gretton Corby NN17 3DF**

Scale: 1:1,000

