

16/00186/COU

Change of use from public house to dwelling, The Woolpack, 21 Stamford Road, Weldon for RWR Weldon Ltd

Background

The Woolpack is a public house which is located on Stamford Road in the village of Weldon. The property is located within the Weldon Conservation Area with an existing vehicular access from Stamford Road leading to the side of the property. The property is at the end of a row of residential terraced properties. Directly opposite the building are the village green and the properties on School Lane, whilst directly to the rear are residential properties located upon the modern Roman Close.

The property is Grade II listed with the following description...

SP928916/214

*WELDON STAMFORD ROAD (North side) The Woolpack Public House
GVII*

Public house. Late C17/early C18. Limestone ashlar with Welsh slate and Collyweston slate roofs. Originally 2-unit plan. 2 storeys. 2-window range of C20 casements in original openings, those at first floor have moulded stone surrounds with drip moulds. Ashlar stack with moulded cornice to left and brick stack to right. C18 outbuilding with Collyweston slate roof attached to right, now forms part of public house with C20 door under wood lintel to left. Interior not inspected, but noted as having remains of an open fireplace.

Listing NGR: SP9281089653

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 objection received by the Parish Council.

Description

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

Site History

- 92/00170/CO** – Erection of an extension
- 92/00171/CO** – Erection of an extension
- 10/00439/DPA** – Removal of existing smoking shelter and erection of new smoking shelter
- 10/00440/LBC** - Removal of existing smoking shelter and erection of new smoking shelter
- 10/00456/LBC** – New pub signs
- 10/00457/ADV** – New pub signs
- 16/00194/LBC** – Change of use of public house to single dwelling, including external alterations and demolition of rear extension, erection of a new double garage with study over and associated works

Policies

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Policy 7 & 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy
- Planning Practice Guidance
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990

Consultation

Weldon Parish Council: Objection on the basis of the loss of amenity

Environmental Services (Health Protection): No objection

Planning Policy: No comments received

Northamptonshire Highways: No objection

Corby Borough Council Property Services: Observations – Marketing information shows a genuine effort at finding a genuine buyer. The time period of marketing appears sufficient.

Conservation Area and Listed Building Consultant: Support the proposed change of use of the public house. Do not support the proposed detached garage

Advertisement/Representations

Neighbour Letters were sent on 16th May 2016 to 15, 17, 19 & 23 Stamford Road, 8 Roman Close, 2, 5 & 6 School Lane and The Rectory.

Site Notice was posted on 19th May 2016

Notice was printed in the Evening Telegraph on 12th May 2016

No Representations were received

Report

The Woolpack is a Grade II listed building located within the Weldon Conservation Area. The property has an existing vehicular access from Stamford Road leading to the side of the property. The property is at the end of a row of residential terraced properties. The village green is directly opposite the public house, whilst directly to the rear are residential properties located upon the modern Roman Close.

The application site is located within the Weldon 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 people using public houses have seen many pubs close across the country. Whilst for many years the Woolpack has operated as a public house in the village, a once profitable market has gradually declined, contributing to the closure of the pub in August 2015.

The decision was made in August 2015 by Enterprise Inns to begin to actively market the Woolpack 'To – Let' until November 2015. However with the pub market declining further there was no interest and Enterprise Inns began to market the public house freehold for sale until January 2016. No offers were received.

In January 2016 Drake & Company took over the marketing of the Woolpack. In evidence dated 13th April 2016, Drake & Company state that the business had been in steep decline for a considerable period of time and following a number of revival attempts their client decided to dispose of their freehold interest in the property.

In terms of marketing Drake and Company carried out an extensive exercise including mail-shots to all local estate agents, pub operators and restaurant operators in the surrounding area as well as erecting a for sale board and advertising the property via their website.

In April 2016 Simpson West became sole selling agents for the Woolpack and the premises was subsequently sold as a development opportunity due to there being no demand for the premises as either a public house or a restaurant.

A letter from Chris West of Simpson West on the 29th September 2016 confirms that the premises continued to be marketed as an on-going concern and still appears on 'Rightmove' to the present day.

Evidence has been provided that shows the Woolpack has been valued and marketed by professional agents for in excess of 12 months. The applicant has confirmed that the property has been 'open for offers' during this period and still received no interest as a public house.

Information for the marketing period has been provided by the applicant which clearly demonstrates that there has been a considerable lack of interest with no offers by anyone to continue running the Woolpack as a public house. It should be noted that 12 months worth of marketing sufficiently demonstrates an acceptable marketing exercise and displays that the premises is unviable in its current use as 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 evident when looking at the demand and the volume of beer sold that the business is not successful and has been operating at a steep decline for a number of years.

The village currently benefits from 2 other public houses (The Shoulder of Mutton and The George) along with the Weldon Cricket Club therefore losing the pub is acceptable in principle and would not be significantly harmful to the supply of public houses within the village.

Further to the public house facilities, Weldon has a good level of additional facilities for a village of its size; these include a shop, cafe, 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 residential area and is at the end of a row of a terrace of residential properties. 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 Stamford Road with vehicular access from the road to the side of the premises. 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 listed building and conservation area

The application property is a Grade II listed building and site falls within the Conservation Area on a prominent location in Stamford Road.

The council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character of Conservation Areas and protect the historic fabric of the listed building. This proposal is for a change of use to residential with some external alterations, including the demolition of a modern rear extension. Internally alterations will be made to the Listed Building and are subject to an accompanying Listed Building application.

The original proposal included a detached two storey garage; however this element of the proposal was withdrawn following the consultation response from the listed building and conservation advisor.

In summary it is considered that without the two storey detached garage, the proposal will retain the fabric of the listed building and 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 sufficient marketing information and evidence which clearly demonstrates that the Woolpack is no longer a viable prospect, the change of use of the Grade II listed 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.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be undertaken in accordance with the following permitted plans: Location and Site Plans Drawing No. 929/05, Existing Elevations 929/02, Proposed Elevations 929/04, Existing Floor Plans 929/01, Proposed Floor Plans 929/03. The development shall be completed in accordance with the approved plans unless alternative details have been subsequently approved following an application for a non-material amendment.

Reason: To specify the permission and for the avoidance of doubt.

Reason for Approval:

Evidence has been submitted which proves that the premises are unviable for the use as a public house. Subject to the conditions above the proposed change of use is considered to preserve the Weldon Conservation Area, retain the historic fabric of the Grade II listed building, ensure the long term use and protection of the building 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 marketing information and plan alterations which included removing the two storey garage element following the conservation area consultation response was requested and provided by the applicant.

Officers to contact:

Peter Baish