

Committee Update

Item 7

HW/FUL/23//00304 – White Horse Public House

Eight additional representations received, three of support and five in objection. These are summarised below:

(The total number of representations is now 19 comprising five objections, 13 in support and one neutral).

Support:

Support development for houses

- Pub cannot be viable at a time when hundreds of pubs are closing each week; housing is preferred
- Building is becoming derelict and an eyesore and having an adverse impact on community
- Other public houses are available nearby at either end of Old Road
- Support but following concerns:
 - concern that there would be a lack of screening on southern side including concern whether cypress hedge on south boundary of plots 1 and 2 would preserve privacy of 158 Old Road and 12 Wheatfields, and affect access to footpath; quality fencing needed until planting matures
 - concern at possible impact on visibility for vehicles entering Old Road from Wheatfields; access for construction vehicles needs careful consideration
 - parking for more than two vehicles for each property is needed; no visitor parking provision which could worsen existing on-street parking congestion in Wheatfields

Object:

- The White Horse has been standing since mid 1800s or earlier and is an integral part of Old Harlow history; irreplaceable historic building, once demolished gone forever; important to keep historic buildings for future generations; a loss to historical assets of area
- Destruction of building not justified, it should be preserved, three years closure is a short timespan in the lifespan of the building, pub was a vibrant community asset long before recent problems of crime/ anti-social behaviour; anti-social behaviour is a management issue and not relevant
- Who can say there will not be investment/ re-opening when economy improves
- Building could be re-used for other purposes; could be converted to dwelling as part of a development
- Loss of trees and wildlife
- Town needs to retain local services and community facilities to retain its character
- No social housing included
- Construction impacts of disruption, traffic, pollution, including for adjacent pensioners' bungalows

Addition submissions from applicant

A statement is submitted on behalf of the applicant which refers to the Council's concerns and is summarised below:

Heritage:

- Building is not statutorily listed and the original character is lost/ not legible/ unbalanced due to poor front and back additions; not clear what the significant features are and nothing significant internally
- A scheme of recording the asset could be secured by condition
- Implementation of the development could be secured pursuant to para.204 of the NPPF
- The loss of the building is in the interests of meeting other policy aims including delivery of much needed housing
- **Support for proposal indicates not a valued community facility**

Officer comment: As set out in the report, following expert advice the building is considered a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). A scheme of recording and securing implementation of the proposed development are not relevant: the building is a NDHA and should be retained.

The balancing exercise of the benefits of additional housing against the harm could by the proposal is set out in the report, and is clear that the application should be refused.

Loss of community use:

- Refers to marketing exercise between June 2021 and My 2022 and further marketing which commenced in April 2023: advertised as commercial development, 'Public House with development potential', £725,000.
- Support for proposal indicates not valued by community
- Broad context of loss of public houses should be considered and the location is not considered favourable

The statement is accompanied by a separate letter from Edward Lewis property management which states there has been no interest/ viewings/ offers for property as a viable business venture despite marketing efforts; and consider that it is unlikely the White Horse will attract any interest as a public house in the foreseeable future.

Officer comment: There is a lack of detail on the nature of the marketing, for example where were the details made available, to what audiences; how was the price arrived at - £725,000 appear excessive; was the building offered for community uses other than a public house. It would have been advantageous to agree the marketing strategy in advance to ensure it was robust and covered all our requirements, including price benchmarking.

The application must be determined against Development Plan policies and while third party comments are a consideration they are not in themselves determinative. It is noted that a number of objections to the proposal have also been received.

Tree loss:

- Plenty of potential for better replacement planting on periphery of site
- Refers to original comments from Council's Arboriculture Consultant

Officer comment:

As set out in the report, the layout is such that any replacement planting adjacent to the south side of plots 1 and 2 would be constrained by the requirement of future occupiers for space and light.

The Arboriculture Consultant qualified his initial comments with concern at prospects for long term tree retention by future occupiers, as set out in the report.

Impacts on neighbours:

- Residential amenity benefits of removal of pub in terms of traffic and noise

- No harm to neighbours in terms of separation distances, fencing 45degree rule, no windows in north elevation of unit 4.

Officer comment:

The adverse neighbour impacts which officers consider would arise are set out in the report.

Amendment to Reason 3

Reason 3 revised to read:

The proposal would be harmful to the appearance and character of the site and its setting by virtue of the layout and resulting loss of trees, and poor quality design *and appearance* at a prominent position in the street scene *at the junction of Old Road and Wheatfields, and in views from neighbouring properties of the blank first floor facades of the houses on plots 3 and 4* . The proposal thereby conflicts with the requirements of Policies PL1, PL7 and H2 of the Harlow Local Development Plan, December 2020.