



VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Retrospective planning application for the erection of a community building and storage shed, with additional parking in association with the Brickmakers public house.

SITE: THE BRICKMAKERS,
CHERTSEY ROAD, WINDLESHAM, SURREY, GU20 6HT



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is submitted on behalf of Mr Coveney in support of his planning application 14/0675. The report provides the very special circumstances in support of the planning application that outweigh harm by reason of inappropriateness or any other harm.
- 1.2 *“As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”* (paragraph 87, NPPF).
- 1.3 *“When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”* (paragraph 88, NPPF).
- 1.4 Paragraph 89 of the NPPF makes it clear that *“A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt.”* However it goes on to list a series of exceptions to this. It is considered that bullet 4 on the list of exceptions is relevant to this application and states:
- *“the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.”*
- 1.5 Unfortunately the buildings that have been removed from the site have no records and the applicant is unable to provide accurate scaling for these previous structures. This document follows two letters submitted to the local planning authority from Messrs Clarke and Mundy confirming that there were structures on-site that have now been replaced by the new buildings.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding the above the Council has ignored the claims of the previous buildings and has instead asked for the applicant to demonstrate any very special circumstances that exist for consideration against an otherwise inappropriate development. In the interests of co-operation the applicant has provided this information within this statement.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The Brickmakers is located on the B386 Chertsey Road and is to the north east of the village of Windlesham which lies to the north of the M3 motorway.
- 2.2 The site is located within the Green Belt with a large detached residence to the western boundary, Chertsey Road to the southern boundary, dense woodland to the eastern boundary and a large residence to the rear. The site comprises a parking area to the front which faces onto the road, and sitting towards the front of the site adjacent to the parking area is the public house which is a two storey brick building with slate roof, together with single storey extensions to both sides and to the rear elevation. To the rear of the public house is additional parking which is accessed by a driveway running down the western side of the building, together with external seating area.
- 2.3 The rear most part of the site (the subject of this application) was previously an overgrown area with two storage buildings. This land has now been cleared and the buildings replaced by a modern multi-purpose building (ancillary to the Brickmakers) and storage shed. An extended parking area for an additional 10 cars has been created and the remainder of the site laid to lawn and landscaped.
- 2.4 The site remains well screened from the public domain, with the development and associated landscaping making a positive contribution to the site and setting of the Brickmakers.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Retrospective planning permission is sought for the erection of a community building and storage shed with associated parking in association with the Brickmakers public house.
- 3.2 The multi-purpose community building and storage shed has replaced two existing timber storage buildings at the rear which had reached the need for repair and significant maintenance. The new multi-purpose room and storage shed was a more cost effective option, aesthetically appealing and a more functional use and can therefore cater for a wider variety of uses.

- 3.3 The development also includes improved landscaping that provides an improvement to the appearance of the site and setting of the Brickmakers.
- 3.4 The building has a multi-functional purpose and is marketed as a flexible room for hire. The room however, is largely targeted at small local businesses seeking to hold meetings or conferences, exercise classes, clubs and community groups. The nominal (and in some instances zero) rental charge allows these small local businesses and groups to access and use a space that meets their requirements on a regular basis without having the financial overheads and costs associated with running their own premises. In addition to the rental fee the Brickmakers offers a drinks facility which further supports the existing business. On some occasions users of the building will stop to have lunch or dinner before or after which offers a more viable option to the long established public house.
- 3.5 An extended access has been created from the existing car park area at the rear with additional parking for ten vehicles provided to accommodate users of the building.

4.0 VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 4.1 The Brickmakers is a significant employer in Windlesham, with 35 staff working on site, the vast majority from the Windlesham area. For a small village this is an important contribution to the local economy.
- 4.2 In order to maintain this contribution Mr and Mrs Coveney have invested a lot of time and money into their local business, this has included renovations to the public house and an improved menu selection. The community building and site improvements to the rear followed this initial investment with a sound economical basis.
- 4.3 Whilst the new community building has an economic benefit to the Brickmakers in terms of attracting a wider range of client the building and use has clear community benefits. The building is let out at a modest hourly rate and has been designed to cater for a variety of needs, these include:
- Power points and broadband provision suitable for small businesses to have meetings or conferences;
 - Private meeting room;
 - Open plan layout suitable for exercise classes;

- Tables and chairs are provided if required for meetings, clubs and community groups/gatherings;
 - Small scale functions.
- 4.4 Through this generic use the building attracts an array of users, including community groups and organisations, small local business users and those looking for a private function room. The space is let out for a modest hourly rate and in some instances free of charge (for community groups and charitable organisations).
- 4.5 Whilst the nominal rate will provide some income generation for The Brickmakers, the main purpose is to draw clientele into the pub restaurant. It is anticipated that the many users will seek to eat and/or drink at The Brickmakers either before or after their use of the building thus ensuring that the viability of the public house remains. It is pertinent to note that The Brickmakers, at the present time, does not offer a catering service for the building but can provide drinks as required. The building therefore attracts additional business that may not have otherwise visited the pub/restaurant.
- 4.6 Whilst there is a clear business support function to the new building, in support of The Brickmakers, the facility does offer the opportunity for the owners to contribute to their local community. As demonstrated through the letters of support and the following list of users:
- Heath Park Drive Action Group
 - Four Yoga/Pilates classes
 - Local Photographer teaching photography classes
 - Two Bridge Clubs
 - Make-up demonstrator
 - Photographer – using facility for photography session
- 4.7 The multi-purpose building has been used by the various community groups, charitable organisations and small businesses. The latter because the facility is a multi-purpose space that can be obtained at an affordable rate. This allows the facility to support small scale local businesses and groups that may from time to time require additional space but without the commitment of rental fees and ongoing maintenance. The new building therefore has a strong local benefit to the community of Windlesham. It is this community spirit and support that is the primary purpose behind the facility.

- 4.8 In addition to the need for the new building the development has involved the tidying up of the rear section of land, improving the general setting and appearance of The Brickmakers site. This offers a more appealing location for customers which in turn help to attract new business and retain existing clientele.
- 4.9 The site clearance works has also enabled ten additional on-site parking spaces. This is particularly beneficial, because following the investment into the business by the applicant the site has become more popular. On occasions this has resulted in an overspill of parking onto the Chertsey Road. The additional parking provision helps to remove some of the overspill parking on the Chertsey Road and contain visitor parking on-site.
- 4.10 The supporting text provided in paragraph 6.10 and 6.13 of policy DM1 states *“There are a number of businesses located within the rural areas of Surrey Heath which make a positive contribution toward the rural economy including small rural based enterprises and a number of larger employers.”* (paragraph 6.10 of the Core Strategy). *“As such the Borough Council will support the rural economy, through positive support for...the re-use or adaptation of existing buildings or where appropriate, replacement buildings for economic purposes. Diversification or economic development could include allowing re-use or replacement buildings for small scale employment opportunities...as well as for community and public uses.”* (Paragraph 6.13 of the Core Strategy).
- 4.11 In the consideration of rural development Chapter 3 of the NPPF goes on to state:
“Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:
- *support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
 - *promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.”*
- 4.12 The development encompasses the key requirements of local plan policy DM1 and Chapter 3 of the NPPF, providing a sustainable expansion of the existing business to the benefit of the local community and the viability of the Brickmakers. Further the

replacement buildings and associated works offer a significant improvement in terms of design and appearance to the benefit of the visual appearance of the site and the setting of the Brickmakers. The development is therefore fully justified and would therefore accord with the objectives of Policy DM1 and Chapter 3 of the NPPF.

4.13 The multi-functional use of the building with low hourly hire charge ensures that the building can be used by small businesses and low or non-profit community groups. This ethos runs alongside the strong community spirit the Brickmakers already has through its various sponsorships and support for local projects, which include:

- Valley End Cricket Club
- Chobham Rugby Club
- Windlesham Football Club
- Windlesham Field of Remembrance Pavilion

4.14 This proven community support gives further strength and appeal to the community building and has a clear relationship and economic benefit to the ongoing operation of the Brickmakers pub/restaurant.

4.15 In a market where public houses are failing on a regular basis the need to offer a wider service to appeal to the local community has never been more important. It is maintained that the multi-purpose use will offer an attractive facility and draw an additional customer base and spending to the Brickmakers ensuring its future survival. As well as retaining its long standing place within the traditional village of Windlesham. It is considered that this is fully recognised and supported through the relevant sections of the NPPF quoted above.

4.16 It is considered that the retrospective development accords with the requirements detailed within the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 and accords with policy DM1 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2012 and its supporting text.

5.0 PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS

5.1 Whilst the building is largely focussed on community groups and small local business use; approximately 80% it is important that it maintains its multi-function purpose so that the building can adapt to changing need and demand. Whilst not a main proportion of the use private hire function does offer further income to the business, when the facility is not being used by community or business users. It is therefore hoped that this will be recognised and the use of the building to continue in its ancillary manner. It is considered that restriction of hours to coincide with the public house would be more appropriate and would enable better control in respect of its operational use.

5.2 The public house operates as follows:

9am to 12pm Monday to Saturday

9am to 10:30pm Sunday

5.3 It is proposed that any hours of restriction for the new building follows a similar pattern, allowing for this facility to be cleared and closed prior to the public house. The following time restrictions are therefore proposed:

9am to 11pm Monday to Saturday

9am to 10pm Sunday

5.4 It is anticipated that this is seen as a proactive approach from the applicant in a bid to work with the local authority and neighbouring residents.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 In summary the multi-purpose building offers an affordable facility to local community groups and small businesses. In turn the users help to support the viability of The Brickmakers as it brings in additional customers to the site. Alongside the community aspect is the ability to offer private hire function space which provides economic support for The Brickmakers.

6.2 The development has also resulted in the improved layout and appearance of the site to the benefit of the setting of the site and its general appearance. In addition the additional parking provided, meets a local need and will reduce overspill onto the Chertsey Road. This offers improvements to visual amenity of the area and highway safety.

6.3 It is therefore contended that the above demonstrates very special circumstances in support of the development that outweighs harm by reason of inappropriateness or any other harm. The support of the development will ensure that the Brickmakers remains viable and can continue to be a part of and support its local community. It is therefore hoped that the above information will now enable officers to support the development as submitted.

