

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(2)	19/01803/FUL Tilehurst	24/09/2019	Demolition of derelict public house and construction of surface car park, including associated fencing and security control Murdochs, Bath Road, Calcot, Reading Berkshire, RG31 7QJ Pureday Limited
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 06/11/2019			

To view the plans and drawings relating to this application click the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=19/01803FUL>

Recommendation Summary: **The Head of Development and Planning be authorised to REFUSE planning permission**

Ward Member(s): Councillor Peter Argyle and Richard Somner

Reason for Committee Determination: Called-in by Councillor Somner due to concerns with the planning history, security and visual amenity on the site and surrounding area.

Committee Site Visit: 23rd October 2019

Contact Officer Details

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing building on site and the development of a new car park.
- 1.2 The application site is located along the Old Bath Road at the junction of Bath Road (A4) and Langley Hill. The site is located in a largely residential area, with residential dwellings to the north, east and west of the site, the south of the site links to Old Bath Road and fronts Bath Road.
- 1.3 The application site is a vacant public house with associated parking and amenity areas. It is located alongside residential development along Bath road predominantly consisting of detached and semi-detached dwellings. To the north of the site is further residential development along Langley Hill and Langley Hill Close.
- 1.4 The vacant public house is currently in a poor state of repair and is considerably dilapidated, this is exasperated by its prominent location adjacent to Bath Road (A4). The building in its current condition does not make a positive contribution to the street scene.
- 1.5 The proposal scheme includes the demolition of the existing structures on site and the development of a 46 space car park. The access to the proposed car park overlaps the existing access, which is located to the east of the southern boundary. The proposal scheme includes 1.8m close boarded timber fencing along the north and east site boundaries and proposes to retain the existing 2m brick wall along the west boundary. The southern boundary will be open and easily visible from Old Bath Road and Bath Road (A4). A manually operated barrier is include at the entrance of the site, this is for the purposes of night time security. Small areas of the site include soft landscaping, these areas are a narrow buffer between the edges of the site and the proposed car parking spaces.
- 1.6 The agent has put forward that the proposed car park will be managed as a 'car share' car park for those who commute along the M4. Whilst it is noted that no detailed information has been provided on the matter, the agent is of the view that there is sufficient demand for the proposed car park based on the monitoring of the nearby Sainsbury's car park. It is also noted that this planning application has not been presented as exclusively for those who wish to car share. There are few local shops and facilities, but no other significant destinations that would require use of the car park, as such it is reasonable to assume use by non-car sharers would be limited.
- 1.7 The agent has submitted that the proposal scheme would be monitored by CCTV with low level halogen lighting, but no plans of such accompany the application. It has been proposed that the car park could be used on a 24 hour basis.

2. Planning History

- 2.1 The table below outlines the relevant planning history of the application site.

Application	Proposal	Decision / Date
06/01872/FUL	Demolition of conservatory, erection of single storey extensions to form trading area, kitchen, toilets, cellar and covered patio.	Approved 27/09/2006

07/01941/FULMAJ	Demolition of existing building and erection of 2 A1 Retail units and 10 flats.	Withdrawn 22/01/2008
08/00563/FULMAJ	Demolition of existing building and erection of 2 two storey blocks of 14 flats	Withdrawn 04/07/2008
09/00009/FULD	Demolition of existing building and erection of 7 houses with associated parking.	Refused 12/03/2009
17/01927/OUTD	Outline application for construction of 4 detached houses and 2 detached garages with associated road works	Withdrawn 01/09/2017
17/02127/DEMO	Demolition of Murdoch's diner public house	Application required 29/08/2017
17/02903/OUTD	Outline application for demolition of existing derelict public house and the construction of 4 detached houses with 2 detached garages with associated road works. Matters to be considered: Access, layout and scale.	Approved 30/04/2018

2.2 The site currently benefits from extant planning consent 17/02903/OUTD for the demolition of the existing public house and the construction of 4 detached dwellings as detailed above. The agent must submit all of the reserved matters (landscaping and appearance) by 30/04/2021 for the consent to remain intact. Following the approval of the reserved matters the agent would have two years to implement the approved scheme.

3. Procedural Matters

- 3.1 Given the nature and scale and location of this development, it is not considered to fall within the description of any development listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. As such, EIA screening is not required.
- 3.2 A site notice was displayed on a lamp post at the junction of Old Bath Road and Langley Hill on 31/07/2019, the deadline for representations expired on 21/08/2019. Comments have been accepted after the statutory deadline.
- 3.3 The proposed development would not be liable under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

4. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

- 4.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report.

Tilehurst Parish Council:	<p>Object</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. This Council is objecting because there is insufficient information about the proposed car park spaces e.g. what is the purpose for the car park, is this to be a permanent arrangement2. The proposal would cause considerable extra traffic exiting onto the bend at the bottom of Langley Hill which is a very busy road3. If the site is used as a car park, this Council is of the opinion that there would be a re-occurrence of traveller incursions
WBC Highways:	No objection raised subject to planning conditions.
Environmental Health	The noise from the proposed car park is unlikely to make any difference because the existing background noise level in this area is likely to be high due to road traffic on Bath Road.
Public Protection	The demolition works and construction of the car park has the potential to cause disturbance to nearby residential properties. A construction management condition and hours of work condition are recommended.
Holybrook Parish Council (adjacent)	<p>Object</p> <p>Holybrook Parish Council support the demolition of the derelict pub but object to the construction of a surface car park.</p> <p>A car park, at this location, would cause additional traffic on the bend at the bottom of Langley Hill which is a very busy road in both directions; especially during the peak travelling times.</p> <p>Despite off-site camera surveillance being a part of the application, Holybrook Parish Council has concerns about the safety of the site.</p> <p>This is the wrong location for this type of proposal.</p>

Public representations

- 4.2 Representations have been received from eight contributors, all of which object to the proposal.

4.3 The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report. In summary, the following issues/points have been raised:

- The proposal scheme would result in the loss of a public house, no replacement is offered as part of the proposal scheme.
- The existing public house should be put on the market for a low cost due to the current state on the building.
- There is planning consent for four dwellings on the site.
- Who will use the parking spaces and for what purpose?
- There is no local demand for the car park.
- Contrary to No. 19 Public Houses
- A car park in this location is likely to attract anti-social behaviour.
- The proposed car park is not in line with other buildings.
- The local needs do not include a car park.
- Will it raise issues relating to unauthorised gypsy and travellers site.
- The entrance would be on to a busy road.
- Could cause danger to children attending Calcot Junior School.
- Will the car park become a park and ride?
- Cars could have a long wait to leave the car park.
- Waste of land.
- Surrounding residents have sufficient car parking facilities.
- Will create traffic on to Langley Hill.
- High possibility of anti-social behaviour taking place on site.
- The car park would impact the essence and character of the community.
- The proposal would not contribute towards environmental sustainability.
- The site should be use for Affordable Housing.

5. Planning Policy

5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.

- Policies ADPP1, ADPP4, CS1, CS13, CS14, CS18 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (WBCS).
- Policies OVS5, OVS6 and TRANS1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).
- Policy P1 of the West Berkshire Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD).

5.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- WBC Quality Design SPD (2006)
- No. 19 Public Houses SPG

6. Appraisal

6.1 The main issues for consideration in this application are:

- The principle of development
- Character and appearance
- Impact on neighbouring amenity
- Highways safety
- Loss of public house
- Extant housing consent
- Economic benefits

Principle of development

- 6.2 The site is located within the defined Eastern Urban Area settlement boundary where, in accordance with Policy ADPP1, most development will be within or adjacent to the settlements included in the settlement hierarchy. The majority of development will take place on previously developed land. The scale and density of development will be related to the site's current or proposed accessibility, character and surroundings. The proposal is considered to be consistent with the principles of this policy.
- 6.3 According to Policy ADPP4, during the current plan period, highway infrastructure will be upgraded to reduce congestion along the A4 corridor, including improvements to the Langley Hill / A4 junction. Highway improvements have already been undertaken by the Highway Authority in this area, but the principle aims of the policy are a relevant consideration.
- 6.4 The site currently benefits from extant planning consent 17/02903/OUTD, for the demolition of the existing public house and the construction of four new dwellings. This is a material consideration in determining this application (discussed further below).
- 6.5 The principle of development on this site is in accordance with the local development plan. Furthermore the principle of redevelopment of the site has recently been established under extant consent 17/02903/OUTD. Subject to the above considerations the principle of development is therefore considered to be acceptable as part of the current application.

Loss of public house

- 6.6 The principle of the loss of the existing public house has been established under planning consent 17/02903/OUTD.
- 6.7 As part of planning consent 17/02903/OUTD and the current application a viability assessment has been submitted. The case officer for 17/02903/OUTD found that the existing public house was no longer viable based on this assessment and found no conflict with Public House SPG. It is considered that there is no substantive reason to disagree with these findings as part of the current application, and in any event the extant consent constitutes a valid fall-back position in respect of the demolition of the existing public house.

Character and appearance

- 6.8 The site is in a highly visible and prominent location in views from the Bath Road (A4) for passing motorists, pedestrians and cyclists. The presence of the site within the street scene is accentuated by the shape of the plot which has a wide frontage adjacent to the road.
- 6.9 The proposal scheme forms part of the street scene of Bath Road (A4) to the south and Old Bath Road to the east. The street scene to the east of Bath Road and Old Bath Road consists of a varied building lines made up of detached and semi-detached

dwellings with a mixture of designs. Whilst the buildings along this stretch of Tilehurst and Calcot are significantly varied, the frontages of Bath Road (A4) and Old Bath Road are ones of built up frontages with substantial buildings set back in their plot, and the plot sizes are largely appropriate for the level of built form within them. The character of the area surrounding the site is one of predominantly residential development.

- 6.10 The former public house building on site ('Murdochs') is in keeping with the current street scene. Whilst the plot size of Murdochs is larger than the surrounding plots, this is appropriate due to the size of the building on site (the current public house). Whilst the footprint of Murdochs is of a greater size than the surrounding development, there are still areas which are not given over to built form, including the existing car park and beer garden, which prior to the vacation of the public house lent the site a complimentary appearance within the street scene that responded well to the pattern of surrounding built form. The existing public house is located in the centre of the existing car park and beer garden, breaking up the openness of the plot. The existing car park contains 20 car parking spaces. Whilst the site in its current state of poor repair has a negative impact on the street scene this is only a temporary situation and for this reason little if any weight should be given to this when assessing the proposal.
- 6.11 Section 12 of the NPPF (Achieving well-designed places) establishes the fundamental principles of good design which includes the ways in which a site functions and adds towards creating sustainable developments. In accordance with paragraph 127, planning decisions should ensure that developments; function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting and establish or maintain a strong sense of place. The proposal scheme does not achieve the expectations of NPPF paragraph 127. In assessing the proposal scheme against these expectations, the proposals scheme will not result in a well-designed development in an appropriate location.
- 6.12 The proposal scheme would remove the existing built form and soft landscaping area, and replace it with an open area consisting predominantly of hardstanding when empty, or cars when in use. This area of Tilehurst is of a suburban character, the street scene largely consists of residential dwellings, introducing an open expanse of hardstanding populated only by vehicles would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. The demolition of the existing built form and increased area of hardstanding would result in a gap in the existing frontage and a noticeable anomaly in the street scenes of Bath Road (A4) and Old Bath Road. It is accepted that part of the site currently consists of hardstanding which is used as a car park, however this is ancillary to the existing public house and is viewed in this context. An increased level of hardstanding and car parking in this area would have a harmful impact on the current street scene.
- 6.13 Policy CS14 states that new development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area and makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. In assessing the proposal scheme against this criteria, the proposed development does not comply with the policy. The proposal scheme will create a visually intrusive and conspicuous gap of hardstanding within the existing street scene which is in a prominent location and clearly visible from the public realm.
- 6.14 Policy CS14 goes on to explain that good design relates not only to the appearance of a development, but the way in which it will function. The site is located in a largely residential area; the siting of a car park in this area is not considered as appropriate given the residential character of the area. The use and design of the proposal scheme

has not been assessed as being informed by the wider and immediate context of the area.

- 6.15 Whilst it may not always be possible for a development to achieve all of the bullets points of Policy CS14, there are a number criteria that are relevant, and that the proposal scheme is contrary to. The proposal scheme does not make efficient use of land whilst respecting the density and, character and landscape of the surrounding area. The site would result in a low density use and the character of the area is residential in nature. The agent has stated via email that the proposal scheme will include CCTV, however this is not included on the submitted plans. As such the proposal scheme does not include any lighting or detailed security measures, rather it would result in an area of hardstanding that would only receive limited light from existing street lights and passing cars. For this reason it is not considered that the proposed development would create a safe environment although it is accepted that the residential nature of the area would provide a level of natural surveillance. Nevertheless, it is not considered that the proposed car park would provide an environment that would be well integrated with the surrounding uses.
- 6.16 The agent has proposed that the development would be used by car sharers, but very limited information or evidence has been submitted to elaborate on this intention or support any associated benefits. It would be possible to apply a condition requiring the pre-approval of a management plan to secure such arrangements, but doing so is not considered necessary to make the development acceptable.
- 6.17 It is for the above reasons that the proposal scheme has been assessed as contrary to Policy CS14.
- 6.18 Under West Berkshire Councils Quality Design SPD Part 3 Residential Character Framework, the proposal site is designated as having a residential character if 'post war – suburban' and is directly adjacent to a character of 'historic (vernacular – Georgina/Regency)'. Policy CS19 states that new developments must have regard to this designation. The proposal scheme is not appropriate in terms of the designated residential character of the site.
- 6.19 In accordance with Policy CS19, new development should be appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character. The proposed car park does not achieve this criteria of Policy CS19 for the reasons set out above, the proposal is therefore considered as contrary to this policy.
- 6.20 Whilst the character of the area is influenced by the A4 Bath Road, it is predominantly a residential area. The scale and character of the car park, and the prominence of the location are such that the proposal would result in a large expanse of hard standing or parked cars that would cause demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal conflicts with the aforementioned policies in this respect.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

- 6.21 The existing use on site does include an ancillary car park which is directly against the boundaries of dwellings along Langley Hall Drive. There is a narrow access drive along the east boundary of the site. Number 2 Langley Hill currently borders the existing beer garden.
- 6.22 In the context of the existing use and the vehicular movements along Langley Hill and the Bath Road, the increased level of car parking, vehicular movements, and associated activity is not viewed as resulting in an unacceptable impact on neighbours in terms of overbearing, increase in noise or loss of privacy.

- 6.23 The Council's Environmental Health officer has raised no objections to the proposal scheme in terms of the impact of noise on neighbours and has stated that the noise from the proposed car park is unlikely to make any significant difference to neighbours due to the existing levels of background noise from Bath Road (A4).

Highway Safety

- 6.24 The Council's Highways Officer has raised no objections to the proposal scheme based on the size of the proposed car park and the presence of an existing ancillary car park within the site.
- 6.25 There is no evidence available that would suggest that the proposed car park would not be used for the purpose of commuters as stated by the agent.
- 6.26 Should the proposal scheme be used by commuters, the development would accord with the aims of policy CS13 in terms of reducing the need to travel, improving travel choice and facilitating sustainable travel.

Extant planning permission for housing

- 6.27 Planning consent 17/02903/OUTD is for the development for four new dwellings and is a material consideration in determining the current application. Policy CS1 states that there should be no net losses from the existing stock of homes in the District. Whilst the dwellings have not yet been constructed, the potential loss and delay to providing new dwellings should be noted. Nevertheless, as the proposed use would be unlikely to prevent the re-development of the site for housing subject to favourable economic conditions, on balance officers are not of the view that this would, in itself, constitute sufficient reason for refusal of this application.

Economic benefits

- 6.28 According to the NPPF, planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The proposal scheme would deliver a business opportunity that would make a small contribution to the economy.
- 6.29 During discussions with the agent, a few matters have been clarified. It is the intention of the agent that the use of the site as a car park may only be temporary until such time as the economic consequences of Britain's exit from the EU are more apparent and the impact on the housing market is known.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 7.1 As set out in this report, the principle of development is generally in accordance with the development plan policies, the loss of the public house has been accepted, and the proposal is unlikely to prevent the implementation of a more profitable housing scheme in the event that market conditions allow such development. The proposal would make a small contribution to the economy by providing a business opportunity on the site, although little evidence of a need for such a facility in this location has been provided. Highway safety would not be demonstrably compromised.
- 7.2 However, the visual impact of a large expanse of hard-standing or parked cars in this prominent location would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of

the area. The existing condition of the site does not justify the granting of planning permission as this could be ameliorated without the proposed development.

- 7.3 On balance, it is considered that the adverse visual impacts on this prominent site would outweigh the limited benefits.
- 7.4 It has been discussed between the case officer and agent that the proposal scheme could receive a temporary permission on such grounds. The case officer has given this careful consideration, but is of the view that this would not be appropriate as the impact and harm to the character and appearance of the area, and the conflict with policy will still be present, even if only for a set period of time. The implications of paragraph 127 of the NPPF are clear that planning decisions should consider both the short and long term consequences of the way in which development will function in terms of the quality of the area. A temporary planning permission is not considered justified.
- 7.5 Taking into account the above considerations the application is recommended for refusal.

8. Full Recommendation

- 8.1 To delegate to the Head of Development and Planning to REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the reason listed below.

Refusal Reasons

1. Impact on character and appearance of the area

The application site by reason of its location and size sits within a prominent position along the Old Bath Road and Bath Road (A4). The immediate context and wider surrounding area is predominately residential in character. The street scene to the east of Bath Road and Old Bath Road consists of a varied building line made up of detached and semi-detached dwellings with a mixture of designs. Whilst the buildings along this stretch of Tilehurst and Calcot are significantly varied, the frontages of Bath Road (A4) and Old Bath Road are ones of built up frontages with substantial buildings set back in their plot. The removal of built form from the site would result in a significant gap in the street scene that would be incongruous in appearance. Furthermore the introduction of an expanse of tarmac and chain link fencing hard against the road would create a very stark and unattractive environment which is out of character and fails to make a positive contribution to the street scene in what is a prominent location. The proposed works are therefore contrary to the requirements of paragraph 127 of the NPPF, which requires, inter alia, that development will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, result in a visually attractive development, is sympathetic to the local character and maintain a strong sense of place. Furthermore the proposed works are contrary to the requirements of Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 which requires development to demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area. Additionally, the proposal fails to comply with Core Strategy Policy CS19 which requires development to appropriate in terms of location and the existing settlement form, pattern and character. The proposal scheme does not respect the residential character of the area.