

Design, Access and Heritage Statement

Kirtlington Village Community shop

Introduction

This application is for the erection of a new community shop and café in Kirtlington Village, Oxfordshire.

Kirtlington village used to have a village shop but it was commercially non-viable which forced its closure.

The loss of the facility has left a great gap in the village amenity and whilst it is acknowledged a replacement village shop is likely to suffer the same commercial failure, a community led shop operated by committed volunteers and following the successful business model has been proposed with overwhelming support. Therefore this application is not to replace the village shop, but to provide a new community shop.

As Kirtlington is a large Category A designated village with a diverse demographic this is considered to be a significant benefit to the village provision.

Site location

The Application site is located in Kirtlington Conservation Area and on the edge of Kirtlington Park registered parkland. It is not located within a flood risk zone.

The proposed new community shop is located centrally within the village and adjacent to the existing well established village hall. Within the same location lies the village's children's playground and a large sports field to the rear of the village hall. There is a generous car park for ample car parking including EV charging facilities and bike storage.

The site is accessed by vehicles via a no through road from South Green. Pedestrians can access the site from the same direction or via several footpaths.

The village hall already has an active events calendar which attracts locals and outside users for both regular and one off events. The site of the village hall and playing field is also the location of almost all community events held in the village.

Following careful consideration it was considered this site was the most suitable location for the new community shop.

Whilst the site is not on the main road through Kirtlington and will therefore not benefit from passing trade, the shop is not conceived as a commercial entity but a community benefit. It will therefore not rely on passing trade for its success. The Co-op food store in nearby Bletchingdon, less than 1.5 miles for Kirtlington and Sainsbury's Local in Heyford Park approximately 3 miles from Kirtlington offer a wide range of products including bakery, monopolise the commercial trade in the area.

Planning history

The most significant planning history was by way of the re-app ref: 21/03745/PREAPP and a site visit undertaken on 13th November 2021. Subsequent responses from conservation were received dated 16th December 2021.

The pre-app was generally positive and the council supported the principle and proposed siting of the development however made several recommendations relating to the orientation, form and materials of the proposed new community shop which are addressed below and within this formal application.

Conservation comments questioned the design of the existing village hall and requested further information about the building itself. These are addressed below;

The Village Hall was designed by Andrew Banks of this office. Banks Design was approached to design a replacement village hall which required relocation from its previous site in the village owing to the development of that site for housing. The Hall's original plan was simple, and designed to take the form of an agricultural barn. The hall was opened in 1983 and has over the years seen development in the way of further extensions as the demand for the building increased.

Other relevant history relates to the previous village shop and approved change of use from the existing redundant shop to residential accommodation. As part of this application both the commercial viability was challenged following provision of new commercial facilities in Bletchington and Heyford Park and the location of the shop acknowledged as inappropriate to support a business with no available parking provision. The support from locals by way of volunteer work and their continued patronage allowed the shop to function as long as it did, but in latter years it ran at a financial loss. The application did however demonstrate the support of the community, which is pledged to continue in the community shop model.

Justification for need

Concerns from CDC have been raised over both the need for a replacement shop and the sustainability of a community shop.

Following the demise of the previous commercial village shop it has demonstrated another commercial shop could not be supported, but a community shop with flexibility to meet changing local demand and fashion and ran by volunteers representing the community was considered a feasible alternative.

The Community shop committee was established and have been in operation for some time. They have been particularly thorough in their research to determine the feasibility of the shop. The committee are increasingly aware of the risk of creating a facility which will not be supported.

The community Shop committee carried out surveys to gauge support with an overwhelming response from the village. A summary of their findings is included in appendix A.

Over the course of the development of the community shop plans there have been several opportunities to promote the concept of a community shop through events such as the Kirtlington village Fete selling the proposed produce, which were well supported. The type of stock will be carefully tailored to demand based on community consultation and suggestion. The shop will aim to

partner with local suppliers to support local business and twofold ensure they have a minimal carbon footprint. Whilst it will operate as a business, it will trade primarily for community benefit.

Design Proposals

The proposed shop is sited to the east of the village hall. Its orientation aligns with the current pattern of the village hall development, following front and rear building lines. It is located a significant distance from the surrounding boundary trees and no trees are within falling distance of the proposed development. The vehicle access track to the far north east of the site will remain unobstructed providing access to the rear playing field.



Proposed location of new shop

The new shop is designed to respect to the adjacent hall without challenging its architectural importance. The form of the new shop takes reference from the adjacent village hall design; It is rectangular in plan with a steeply pitched gable roof. The scale is more modest than the village hall itself; it is single storey in nature. Its primary entrance faces onto the already sizable and well established current car park for the village hall, along the same plane as the entrance to the village hall to preserve site legibility. The rear elevation faces into the sports field behind. The seating area of the café will benefit from direct views onto the playing field and into the children's play area beyond. Internally, the facilities provided are simple; an open plan flexible retail and café space, a small stock area and an accessible WC.

The proposed building will be constructed as a timber frame building with vertical timber cladding and a slate pitched roof. Solar panels will also be sited on the rear roof slope to increase its sustainability with the energy generated from the solar used to offset against the running costs of the shop and cafe.

Whilst timber cladding was considered to be undesirable by the council during the course of the pre-app, there is a strong justification for its use in this location that was not appreciated or explored at the time of the Pre-app. There are significant elements of timber cladding on the existing village hall itself, and the proposed new community shop has therefore drawn reference to this in order to visually stitch the buildings together and cementing the new shop in its location.

Conservation comments were also negative to the use of the timber cladding in the setting of the conservation area and in proximity of the Grade II listed Historic Kirtlington Park. However, Kirtlington Polo club cabins (marketed as Mirror houses, Kirtlington) Planning ref 22/01261/F were designed in full timber cladding and were approved within the setting of the Grade II listed historic Kirtlington park Registered Park and garden and next to the Capability brown designed lake. 23/00985/DISC relating to the same application generated no objection from Conservation considered that the timber cladding was not detrimental to the character and appearance of the registered park.

Precedents within the village demonstrates an acceptance by the council of the use of timber cladding within the village and within the context of the Kirtlington Conservation Area. A recent approval for a new detached garage planning ref 23/00838/F included for a full timber clad building.

In addition, the Scout hut at the far end of the playing field was constructed in timber cladding (although it has now become redundant) and the old social club on the same field that was demolished many years previous was also a timber clad building. This demonstrates the historic use of timber cladding in the location.

The shop is conceived to a similar planning significance as the building mentioned above.

Planning policy

S29 – proposals that will involve the loss of existing village services which serve the basic needs of the local community will not normally be permitted.

This application seeks to restore a lost amenity delivered through a different, and more suitable business model.

Under the Neighbourhood plan, the proposals provided within this application would be supported by policy PD4 and PD5.

The building is tucked up against the existing village hall within an existing unused space. The design of the building relates well to the existing village hall on an already established site and the building would not impact the existing amenity of the village hall which demonstrates compliance with policy ESD15 of the Cherwell Local plan. There would be no loss in important vistas or views onto or from the church or the Kirtlington Historic Parkland Owing to its location. This demonstrates the proposals are not in conflict with paragraph 200, chapter 16 of the NPPF.

Access

Site Access

The application site is located centrally in the village of Kirtlington.

It is accessed off the A4095 via South Green. There are also a number of footpaths around the village providing pedestrian access to the site, including through the church yard.

The proposed new building is located in an already established location adjacent to the village hall and a large existing village car park. The existing car park is particularly generous, although it is expected that most customers would access the building by foot or bike.

Whilst it is expected that the shop will be used mainly by those familiar with the village, the hope and expectation is that the users of the village hall will also benefit from the facility.

A transport statement dated July 2023 is submitted to support this application.

External Access

The proposed design of the shop and café is of a simple rectangular and legible plan. There is only one opening on the front elevation making the entrance to the shop very visible to users.

Owing to the open nature of the site, access for loading and deliveries will be easy, although large commercial deliveries of stock are not expected owing to the proposed nature of the shop business.

Internal Access

The shop is single storey in nature and all facilities will be accessible from ground level access. Good visibility and legibility and the café at the rear can be accessed through the main front doors or around either side of the building if the shop is busy with customers.

An accessible WC will be provided within the new shop.

Heritage

Heritage is being addressed owing to the site's location in a Conservation Area and on the edge of Kirtlington Park registered parkland. Although development on the site is relatively modern, it preceded these planning designations.

The site of the village hall was selected when the land for the previous village hall was required for a private housing development. This site was offered by the same owners of the original site of the village hall. The previous site of the village hall was located on land towards the north of the Village. The original village hall was a timber clad building.

The current, and replacement village Hall was designed to take the form of an agricultural barn. The hall was opened in 1983 and has over the years seen development in the way of further extensions as the demand for the building increased.

The closest building of heritage significance to the proposed new community shop is St Mary's church, a Grade II * listed building. However, owing to the location of the shop, tucked into the corner of the site and the retained tree lined boundary, there are no direct or unobstructed views from the new community shop to the church. The church will still retain its open character with direct visual links to the village hall and parkland beyond.

Positive vistas identified in the Kirtlington Conservation Area appraisal are not threatened by the discreet location of the proposed new community shop.

The site lies in an area of local archaeological interest, along with the majority of the Kirtlington Conservation area, however the proposed construction of the building will be lightweight which will

minimise the works in the ground and the potential to disturb any archaeological significance. The archaeological obligations were highlighted in the pre-app.

The development of the Kirtlington Polo club cabins (marketed as Mirror houses, Kirtlington) Planning ref 22/01261/F were new buildings approved within the setting of the Grade II listed historic Kirtlington park Registered Park and garden and next to the Capability brown designed lake. They are entirely commercial in nature and not for community benefit. The approval of these buildings demonstrates that appropriate new development is permitted within the Grade II listed historic Kirtlington park Registered Park.

Conclusions

The proposed Community shop has overwhelming support from the Village, and the need for a shop justified. The location of the shop is deemed suitable and sustainable, and not considered detrimental to the adjacent heritage assets or the character of the conservation area. The design of the shop has been developed in accordance with the pre-app response from the Council and relates well to its proposed setting.

APPENDIX A

Community Shop and Café survey A great opportunity to hear your voices!



Wow! What a wonderful response to our Questionnaire! THANK YOU so much everyone! So many ideas from so many people in your replies, your chats with us and our volunteers and your emails. We're still working through everything you say. The full results will be accessible in our Business Plan. But we want to share what you're saying as soon as we can in this article and YES we agree that everyone needs good coffee!



Andrew Banks' sketches for the proposed shop beside the Village Hall

See overleaf for a detailed account of the survey and the results

