

Planning App: 19/02700/F

Location: Mawles Farm, Main Street, Sibford Gower, OX15 5RW

Proposal: Conversion of existing stonework/brick barns to 1 no. dwelling and conversion of existing steel pole barn to 1 no. dwelling. Associated works including landscaping and new access

Sibford Gower Parish Council wishes to STRONGLY OBJECT to this application.

The material considerations identified have a very negative impact on the community and the character of this important conservation area location, and will significantly and demonstrably outweigh their perceived benefits.

This is an important group of buildings located within a strongly defined area of the village, adjacent to the main crossroads within the Sibford Gower Conservation Area. The barns, originally part of Mawles Farm, have recently been separated from the original farmhouse (now known as Mawles Cottage) following the recent sale of the working farm. Elements of the barns contain identified undesignated heritage assets, particularly the solid masonry wall without significant openings fronting Main Street which is identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a feature of special interest (para 9.21.4).

The applicants' decision to separate the original farmhouse from the farmyard and associated buildings has not been helpful in reviewing this application. A considered reappraisal could identify other appropriate options for this setting.

The plans provided for the currently identified sub-division of the farmyard and farm buildings, disassociated from the original farmhouse, offer much evidence reflecting sensitivity to the heritage of the conservation area location, acknowledge the importance of the existing farmyard layout, offer a minimum interference approach to the conversion of existing buildings, together with a sympathetic use of materials within the more contemporary design aspects associated with the existing pole barn, retains the current visibility profile for the barns within the conservation area.

It would be true to say, as the applicant has done through their citation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018, that in many respects, the design proposals are, indeed *"sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting"*; and to the greater part, they have succeeded in introducing *"appropriate innovation or change"*.

But, in excluding the original farmhouse from the application – even though the property is also wholly owned by the applicant – and, in consequence, separating the farmhouse from the farmyard and associated buildings, the application entirely flies in the face of regard for the historic nature of the site, which is a constant and proper concern within in the Planning Statement . It is our view that any identified approval of the site within the Conservation

Area Appraisal needs to be rigorously addressed by planning officers demonstrating a full awareness of the location and its planning history.

We believe that, in the final outcome, both assertions identified in the Planning Statement (PS) at 4.4 *“The proposed conversion will ensure that the essence of the character of the farmyard is maintained”* and *“the important relationship between the buildings and the street frontage (will be) retained”* require rigorous justification, scrutiny and assessment.

Other material considerations of equal concern are identified:

1. The proposed creation of a large opening within the solid masonry wall facing Main Street:

- Information provided (Heritage Statement, Figs 9-12) identify the previous range of terraced cottages which was replaced by the existing wall between 1905 – 1922, showing that there is no record of vehicular access from Mawles Farm onto Main street at any time in the recorded past.
- The Sibford Gower Conservation Area Appraisal identifies *“the loss of the solid masonry walls without significant openings”* (para 9.21.4) as an identified feature of special interest, representing a significant element in the essential character of the village.
- To avoid creating an c8 metre wide opening in these solid masonry walls, the most serious consideration must be given to an appropriate re-working of the existing farmyard access via Pound Lane

2. The negative impact of the proposed new access on available on-street parking, traffic movements and pedestrian safety:

- We do not accept either of the two statements put forward in the Planning Statement 4.18 that *“It has been demonstrated that there will not be an unacceptable impact on highway safety”* and that *“the residual cumulative impacts on the road network will not be severe”*. In fact, taking account of the level of concern voiced to us as the Parish Council, and the number of issues raised, we are bound to conclude it **has not** been demonstrated that there will not be an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In fact, the conclusion must be that the residual cumulative impacts on the road network **will be severe**.
- Visual supporting evidence is attached, identified through a series of nine photographs, entitled: “Traffic and Pedestrians on Main Street at the proposed new entrance to Mawles Farm between 0840 – 0855 on Monday, 27th January 2020”.
- The Access Appraisal document (David Tucker Associates) fails to address key issues relevant to the Main Street location ie on-street parking availability, pedestrian safety, proximity to the village primary school, significant vehicle movements ie village bus, school bus, large farm vehicles.
- Significant errors are identified in Document 04 Proposals:
 - The statement in 4.13 is wrong. Creating the proposed new access and associated visibility issues will result in the consequential loss of 3 on-street parking spaces
 - Fig 37 Access and Parking makes no allowance for the impaired visibility, and consequent danger to other road users, when vehicles are parked adjacent to

the existing footpath on either side of the proposed new access – a location where the road width is already frequently reduced to single track

- There is a significant history within the Parish records to identify the crossroads immediately adjacent to the proposed access site as a particular hazard to pedestrian safety, whereby large vehicles frequently mount the pavement adjacent to Mawles Barns as they struggle to safely negotiate this very tight turning.
- While the proposed sub-division of the site provides for associated off-street parking for Dwelling 1, the separation of the original farmhouse (now known as Mawles Cottage) from its associated farmyard generates further long term on-street parking pressures in Main Street as there is no dedicated off-street parking provision identified
- The recent planning approval for the Methodist Chapel to residential use (18/02159/F) generated additional long-term pressures on the extremely scarce on-street parking provision available adjacent to the crossroads
- Current levels of on-street parking in the immediate vicinity of the Main Street site due to the nearby village primary school regularly reduce its width to single track, raising significant highway access problems for larger vehicles ie school bus, village bus service, large farm vehicles, with associated pedestrian safety issues
- On-street parking provision is extremely scarce in the crossroads area, and is regularly used by surrounding properties to alleviate known problem parking areas – eg Main Street towards the pond, Bonds End Lane. Any reduction, especially in the vicinity of the barns, will add further pressures.
- It is our contention that the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Highways report associated with this application, referenced in the Access Appraisal and 04 Proposals (para4.12 and 4.13) documents, fails to address the key issues identified above through its incomplete assessment of the specific and local issues for pedestrian and highway safety associated with this already hazardous location. Consequently, the resulting recommendations must be considered flawed and reviewed as a matter of urgency.

3. The Proposed sub-division of the Mawles Farm Barns site:

- Strong community opposition is identified for the new access proposal onto Main Street, deemed desirable in order to accommodate the current proposal for 2 separate units, in addition to the existing farmhouse.
- Creative utilisation of the existing Pound Lane access would remove current objections and receive strong community support
- The Heritage Statement (1.6) identifies the original double yard layout with an opening allowing access to both yards, thereby offering a historical precedent for the division of the farmyard, rather than the unbroken wall currently proposed.

4. Construction work traffic movements and parking, together with associated highway/pedestrian safety:

- Recognising the identified scarcity of on-street parking and potential large vehicle movements in Main Street, there is a need to demonstrate that the construction work and the parking of construction vehicles do not have a negative impact on highway and pedestrian safety.

- Consideration should be given to addressing such concerns through an appropriately worded condition.

Traffic and pedestrians on Main Street at the proposed new entrance to **Mawles Farm** between

8.40 and 8.55am on Monday 27th January 2020.



8.40am



8.40am

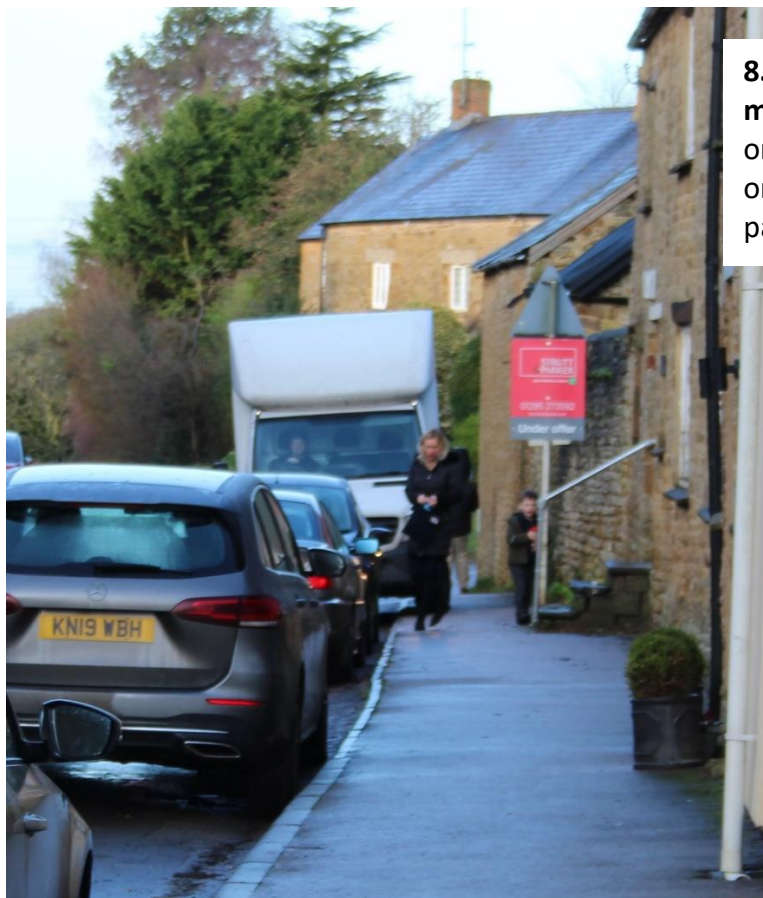


8.44am



Note: Pedestrians in road on Main Street.

8.47 am



8.50 am (note; van mounts pavement on corner to let oncoming vehicle past)



8.50am



8.51am

8.51am



Note;
School bus
has been
waiting at
crossroads
for road to
become
accessible.

8.52

