

Dijksman Planning

35 Berkeley Road, Newbury, RG14 5JE

Planning Design & Access Statement

**Change of Use of Shop to
Residential, alternations to front
window and two new roof lights**

**Kirtlington Post Office Stores
1 Troy Lane
Kirtlington
OX5 3HA**

Application
by

R Simpson

Proposed Closure of Shop

1. Number 1 Troy Lane is currently in use as a two-bedroom flat (on two floors), with most of the ground floor in use as a small village shop and post office. This application seeks to change the use of the retail space into residential, to create a larger four-bedroom dwelling.

Background to the Application

2. This property has been in use as a small village shop for many years, probably since the war, and has been owned and run by the current occupiers since 2003. The operation of the business has always been a struggle, as a very small shop it depends upon a combination of mainly passing trade plus patronage of local people in the village.
3. In common with many small shops it has been under pressure for many years but has benefited from the assistance of members of the local community to help it survive. There have been enough volunteers to enable one additional person to work in the shop almost every day.
4. Unfortunately, in September 2019 a Co-op convenience food store opened in nearby Bletchington, less than 1.5 miles from this shop. This Co-op is a brand-new building, with ample car parking, representing a £520,000 investment (Oxford Mail 3rd Oct 2019).
5. The consequence in terms of passing trade has been devastating, and overall trade has inevitably reduced significantly; to the point that this small shop now loses money every day it remains open, sadly this is irrespective of the help of volunteer staff and the support of regular village customers.
6. This application is therefore a recognition of the inevitable closure of this small shop; in the face of the demonstrably more commercially viable convenience shop provision less than a three minute drive away.

Policy Context

7. The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 was formally adopted by Cherwell District Council on 20th July 2015 and provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2031. The Local Plan 2011-2031 – Part 1 replaced a number of the ‘saved’ policies of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 though many of its policies are retained and remain part of the development plan. The relevant planning policies of Cherwell District’s statutory Development Plan are set out below:
8. CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 2011 - 2031 PART 1 (CLP 2031 Part 1)

Policy Villages 1 - Village Categorisation

Policy Villages 2 - Distributing Growth Across the Rural Areas

Policy ESD 15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

9. CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN 1996 SAVED POLICIES (CLP 1996)

Policy C28 - Layout, Design and External Appearance of New Development

Policy C30 - Design of New Residential Development

Policy C31 - Compatibility of Proposals in Residential Areas

Policy S29 – Loss of Existing Shops

10. Other Material Planning Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Principle of the Development

11. The most relevant, albeit now very dated saved policy is found in the 1996 Local Plan - Policy S29 – as follows:

“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.”

Supporting Text – *“The District Council recognises the importance of village services, particularly the local shop and pub, to the local community and will seek to resist the loss of such facilities whenever possible. However, it is also recognised that it will be difficult to resist the loss of such facilities when they are proven to be no longer financially viable in the long term.”*

12. This policy reflects the period in which it was made, over 24 years ago. It refers to village services which serve the “basic needs” of the local community, this is a policy drafted before the invention of the Internet, online shopping and all that goes with it. Therefore, the policy needs to be given appropriately reduced weight. Notwithstanding this, the supporting text of the policy acknowledges that local facilities can be rendered redundant and unviable.

13. In relation to the current application the basic shopping needs of the local community do not in any way depend upon this shop; there is a new and significantly better provision of local convenience shopping less than 1.5 miles to the south. In this context it is self-evident that this small village convenience shop has no future. In addition, it is clear from discussions that have taken place that the post office element can be relocated to the Bletchington Co-op.

Design and Appearance

14. The change of use of the ground floor shop accommodation into additional residential accommodation results in no material external alterations other than the provision of two rooflights within the rear

elevation and a change to the fenestration to replace the shop window with a more domestic scale opening matching existing windows in this terrace. This element is not an essential change.

15. There are no other physical external changes proposed as none are necessary.

Parking and Access

16. One of the key advantages presented to customers by the new Co-op food store at Bletchington is ample car parking. The current shop has no off-street parking, with limited on-street parking available directly outside. This is a very busy road and finding a parking space close to the Kirtlington shop is a challenge, particularly at peak times.
17. This application represents a material reduction in parking demand compared to the use of this building as a shop. The change from a two-bed flat into a four-bed house does imply one additional parking space, but this still represents a significant reduction in demand compared to the use of the property as a shop, even at its now reduced level of commercial activity.

Residential Amenities

18. The property has a large rear garden, the kitchen is already on the ground floor, therefore as a single dwelling it has perfectly acceptable residential amenities. This change of use of the ground floor retail floor area has no impact upon this situation.
19. The change of use of the shop will have benefits in terms of the residential amenities of its neighbours, in reducing the frequency of cars parking directly outside their properties.

Conclusions

1. This small already struggling village shop has been devastated by the opening of the new £520K convenience food store at Bletchington.
2. That large new convenience store is less than 1.5 miles (3 Minutes' drive) to the south, and it renders this shop redundant in terms of possible passing trade, and it is therefore now loss making.
3. The current shop has very limited on street parking, on a busy and hazardous road. The ease of accessibility and ample parking provision at the new Co-op are demonstrably more attractive.
4. The incorporation of the retail element of this building into the existing dwelling to create a larger dwelling of four bedrooms, rather than two, has no adverse planning consequences.