Planning Committee

Meeting Date:	**6 May 2025**
Contact Officer:	**Graeme Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer**

Avon House, 82 Wellington Street

P25/S1204/FUL

Construction of a replacement roof, new communal stair extension and conversion of resultant buildings into 2 x 1 bed and 2 x 2 bed flats.

Reason for report:
☒ The application is a FUL, Outline or Reserved Matters application

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1. Officer Recommendation:

SUPPORTS with comments:

- Opportunities should be sought to provide external amenity space within the "excess" parking spaces.
- The opinion of the District Council is sought on whether it would be appropriate to seek proof the building has been marketed for employment uses in line with 2035 Local Plan Policy EMP3.
- Support is subject to the approval of the OCC Highways Team.

Call-In
If the recommendation is to object, or likely to be contrary to SODC's recommendation, the Town Council must agree whether to request that SODC Councillors call the application into SODC's committee. Thame's District Councillors are not bound to this request.

2. Key Issues:

The site has extant permitted development permission for conversion to 2 x 2-bed flats.

- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

  The application proposes minor alterations to the fenestrations on the south and east elevations which face onto 3 and 4 Gas Alley. A new window is proposed at second floor height but this will serve an ensuite, so any increased risk of overlooking is deemed minimal.
  The front extension will cause some loss of outlook for 3 Gas Alley. The increase in pitch of the roof will raise it by approximately 1.8m but should not cause inappropriate harm to private amenity space of 3 Gas Alley, which sits south of Avon House.

- Parking and Access

  The site currently has 8 parking spaces. Bin and bicycle storage and the extension for an external staircase would remove two of these. The application, therefore, proposes 6 parking spaces for the 4 flats, plus cycle storage. This is noted as being in excess of the maximum spaces required by the County Council Highways Team. Highways also note insufficient evidence has been given regarding how the required 16 bicycle spaces they would require would be provided.

- Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

  The area is characterised by a mix of uses and designs. The use of rendering is considered acceptable.

- Quality of living environment for future occupiers

  The applicant states that the floor spaces comply with national standards for the number of bedrooms/persons stated. No outdoor amenity space is provided. The site could provide for a small, enclosed outside area that could also offer a visual improvement to the public realm in line with TNP2 Policy CPQ3.

  Bin storage is shown on the plans, and a refuse collection statement has been submitted. The District's Waste Management Team have responded stating they will not comment on waste matters as the applicants is choosing to use a private waste company to deal with arising domestic waste.

- Change of Use

  The applicant's Planning Statement is dated 4 April 2025 yet quotes the 2013 Thame Neighbourhood Plan. It makes reference to policies that are no longer part of the Development Plan.

  Within their Statement, however, the applicant declares that in effect the previous office use has been superseded by the introduction of residential use. The applicant has referred to an extant, prior approval "fallback" position that would allow for the conversion of the existing premises to two, 2-bed dwellings.

  As ever, a physical conversion to residential use would be required to legitimately enable this change, but to date the offices remain in commercial use. It is noted that the applicant does not declare a loss of existing dwellings, proof that no conversion has taken place. The existing building would need an extension, second floor and change of access and fenestration to enable the proposed development hence the reason for this application.

  The site is within the Town Centre, as shown within TNP2. Offices are classed as Class E uses; such uses are defined as Employment Uses within the 2035 Local Plan Glossary and employment land protected from loss through Policy EMP3. Seeking the District Council's opinion on whether it would be appropriate to ask for proof of marketing of the unit is advised.

- Alleyways

  TNP2 Policy GAA1 would support the provision of entrances and windows that face onto the footpath. At least one window would practically overlook the alley, from a lounge, with at least one first floor bedroom window looking southwards, along the alley and it appears there may be an existing gateway onto Gas Alley from the application site. The proposal is compatible with Policy GAA1.

3. Planning History:

Application Number	Description	TTC Decision	SODC Decision
P18/S0422/PDO	Change of use to two x 2 bed flats from B1 Office use.	Noted/No Comment	Granted 27/03/2018
P22/S3340/FUL	Demolition of existing building and erection of 5 x 1 bedroom flats.	Objects – Contrary to WS12, impact on residential amenity, poor amenity for occupants, insufficient information on floorspace and parking, poor design	Withdrawn prior to determination 01/11/2022
P24/S3668/N5D	Change of use from Class E Offices to Class C3 Residential (2 x 2 bedroom self-contained flats).	Noted/No Comment	Prior Approval Not Required 10/01/2025

4. Risk Appraisal

Dependent on the Town Council's recommendation to SODC is it likely that there would be a contrary decision by SODC? If so then a councillor should be nominated at the meeting to represent the views of the Town Council at the planning committee.

5. Policies Relevant to the Application

The following policies are of particular relevance when considering this application.

Thame Neighbourhood Plan 2 (TNP2) Policies

GDH1	Housing development and allocations
GDH2	Housing type, tenure and mix
GDR2	Town Centre uses
CPQ1	Design in response to local character
CPQ3	Town Centre design principles
CPQ5	Sustainable design and construction
GAAT1	Active travel
GAM1	Mobility hubs and EVs

SODC Local Plan 2035 Policies

DES1	Delivering high quality development
DES2	Enhancing local character
DES5	Outdoor amenity space
DES6	Residential amenity

DES7	Efficient use of resources
DES8	Promoting sustainable design
EMP3	Retention of employment land
ENV5	Green infrastructure in new developments
ENV6	Historic environment
ENV8	Conservation areas
EP3	Waste collection and recycling
H3	Housing in the towns of Henley-on-Thames, Thame, and Wallingford
H9	Affordable housing
H11	Housing mix
H16	Backland and infill development and redevelopment
H20	Extensions to dwellings
INF1	Infrastructure provision
STRAT1	The overall strategy
TH1	The strategy for Thame
TRANS2	Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility
TRANS4	Transport assessments, transport statements and travel plans
TRANS5	Consideration of development proposals