

Mr G J K and Mrs K F Swindells

rdc
Robert Doughty
Consultancy

Planning, Design and Access Statement (Including Proposed Change of Use of The Mermaid Inn to Five Apartments, the Erection of Three Detached Dwellings, Associated Demolition and Alteration to Existing Access off Stockhouse Lane.
The Mermaid Inn, 2 Gosberton Road, Surfleet,
Lincolnshire PE11 4AB.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. We have been instructed by Mr G J K Swindells and Mrs K F Swindells, owners of the Mermaid Inn, Surfleet to submit a Full Planning Application for the change of use of the Mermaid Inn to create 1 x 1 bed apartment and 2 x 2 bed apartments at ground floor and 2 x 2 bed apartments at first floor. In addition, a detached 3 bed dwelling will be erected on the Stockhouse Lane frontage (with separate access from Stockhouse Lane) and 2 x 4 bed detached dwellings will be developed on the existing Inn car park and beer garden overlooking the River Glen.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1. The Mermaid Inn is a two-storey period property with wooden sash windows, red and white painted brick to the main facades with a mix of slate and concrete pantiles to the roofs. Formerly a pair of dwellings, the Inn occupies a prominent position close to the road bridge across the River Glen and the junction of Gosberton Road and Stockhouse Lane in the middle of Surfleet. The Inn occupies the north-eastern corner of the application site on the junction of Stockhouse Lane and Gosberton Road. To the south of the principal building there is the River Glen and the main car park together with a riverside beer garden with a permanent outside bar and seating. There is a small ancillary single storey building within the main body of the site and another single storey building on the Stockhouse Lane frontage.
- 2.2. Access into the site is from Gosberton Road with the exit onto Stockhouse Lane. This system was operated by the applicants due to the poor visibility onto Gosberton Road.
- 2.3. The general character of the area to the west of the application site is predominantly residential with the iron girder road bridge (1884) over the River Glen dominating the views out of the site to the south-east.
- 2.4. Alongside the River Glen there is a floating landing stage/ mooring and a brick revetment wall with ornamental coping and railings plus archway down to the staging characterises the riverside views. The levels within the site fall approximately 900mm from east to west. There are no trees on site and two short sections of deciduous hedges lie adjacent to the single storey store in the roughly the middle of the site.
- 2.5. A selection of photos below highlight the points above.



View of the eastern elevation taken from Surfleet Road



View from the bridge across the River Glen to the beer garden and car park



View from the road bridge across the beer garden and car park towards development fronting onto Stockhouse Lane.



View from the existing access (to be closed as part of the proposal) on Gosberton Road into the car park with the Inn on the right-hand side.



View from Stockhouse Lane with the building on the right-hand side which is to be demolished (the defibrillator will be relocated following discussions with the Parish Council)



Looking north along Gosberton Road at the junction with Station Road with the application site to the right of the picture on the Stockhouse Lane junction and the church of St Laurence to the right.

3. COMMERCIAL HISTORY OF THE MERMAID

- 3.1. Our client purchased the property in 2010 when it was largely derelict and invested over £200,000 into the overall refurbishment and improvement both inside and out. There are 6 double rooms, an office and sitting room on the first floor with restaurant and kitchen facilities on the ground floor.
- 3.2. The Mermaid Inn has, like all rural pubs, restaurants and rural businesses, seen a lower footfall in the last 10 years since the introduction of the smoking ban in 2007, the increased sales of alcohol from supermarkets at cheap prices and vigorous hikes in business rates that are set for 10 year periods. The ramifications of the COVID pandemic has seen the business close and all the staff have now confirmed that they have found new jobs or are unavailable to work in the hospitality industry because they live with vulnerable groups and do not wish to risk the lives of family members. The fact that the Mermaid used to be 2 dwellings means that its narrow corridors are not conducive to the new normal of social distancing and drastic and costly internal alterations would need to be made to meet the new standards, which will most likely be with us for several years to come.
- 3.3. The huge garden, which although beautiful, costs £150 a week on average to maintain and yet is used on average for only 45-50 days a year due to British weather. Since 2014, the Inn could no longer hold functions in marquees as the Council served a noise abatement order which it has confirmed will not be lifted due to constant complaints from adjacent neighbours about noise from music and people chatting and laughing too loudly.
- 3.4. The Mermaid has always been run as a restaurant and Bed & Breakfast, there has never been the clientele around to justify a reliance on wet sales as that was provided by the nearby Crown Public House (we understand that The Riverside Hotel has also closed and it is planned to be redeveloped). During the week, the restaurant doors were always shut by 10pm and 11pm on Friday and Saturday and 3pm on a Sunday.

-
- 3.5. Following the closure of the Mermaid, the Crown Public House will remain to serve the people of Surfleet, which, as was reported in a recent parish magazine, only has 327 households.
 - 3.6. In June 2020 the business was put up for sale with Everard Cole as “offers invited” and so far there has only been interest from builders wishing to redevelop the site with the highest tentative offer received being £500K, which is well below the asking price and which was never made in writing. There was one offer to rent the Mermaid, but this was rejected because as with all rental properties, no matter how many clauses are in the agreement, the property would end up needing a complete overhaul after the tenancy finished. The property remains on the market with no new interest having been received since Christmas 2020.
 - 3.7. The owners have therefore taken the decision to seek the change of use of the Inn to residential and the redevelopment of the grounds to create 3 new dwellings. Recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order have also seen steps taken to make it easier to change the use of buildings such as restaurants into residential use.

4. DESIGN

Use

- 4.1. The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Surfleet and therefore the principle of residential use is acceptable and complies with Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan ('the local plan').
- 4.2. The existing Inn could be converted back to two dwellings, but it is felt that the location of what would be two sizeable dwellings so close to the road and with compromised outside amenity space, would not be a viable project. The decision was therefore taken to look at converting the entire building into apartments, specifically for the over 55s. This can be done with little or no alteration to the exterior (save from the removal of a relatively modern wooden extension close to the Stockhouse Lane entrance). There are relatively few internal features of note, other than attractive ceiling plasterwork in communal stairwells which can remain. It is, therefore, proposed to change the use of the principal building into 5 apartments (1 x 1 bed and 4 x 2 bed) with access from Stockhouse Lane, together with an area of riverside amenity and a separate building (to be created following the demolition of an existing outbuilding) for bicycle storage.
- 4.3. In addition to the change of use of the principal building, it is also proposed to erect up to two new 4 bed dwellings within what is the beer garden and car park and a further 3 bed dwelling to be erected following the demolition of an existing single storey outbuilding to the west of the Stockhouse Lane access. The latter proposal will also see the visibility splays at this junction improved.
- 4.4. The modest cottage-scale dwelling on Stockhouse Lane will be in the same location (but not as wide) as the existing building.
- 4.5. The two detached dwellings will take advantage of views of the river with separate parking accessed off Stockhouse Lane. Looking at the historic development in the area, it is evident that riverside development adjacent to the Mermaid and the bridge have in the past been a feature of this part of Surfleet and it is this we are looking to replicate, albeit with a more contemporary form of architecture.
- 4.6. We understand that the operation of the Mermaid has caused problems with local residents in the past. Like many similar establishments,

the Mermaid has needed to make the best use of the assets available on site and these have included the well-tended beer garden and external bar area.

- 4.7. The removal of the existing use will have a benefit in terms of impact on local residents. The proposed residential use of the site will be compatible with the existing character of development in the area and therefore accords with local plan Policy 2, 1).

Amount and layout

- 4.8. The conversion of the principal building has been proposed in such a way that requires very little internal and external alterations which will mean that the building will retain its prominent status within the street scene. The required parking for the 5 apartments can all be provided for within the existing car park area and so there will be little if any change to the character of the area, or any wider impact. The number of apartments is therefore appropriate to the building and area and is in accordance with local plan policy 2, 1).
- 4.9. The proposed 3 bed detached house will be constructed on the site of an existing single storey outbuilding which runs parallel with Stockhouse Lane. The removal of the existing building enables in part the improvement to the access on to Stockhouse Lane, along with the removal of a relatively modern wooden extension to the Inn itself. The new dwelling will be similar in style and scale to that erected within the last 10 years immediately to the west. Parking is contained within the plot itself and there is a small amenity area to the rear.
- 4.10. Views of the site are dominated by the heavy iron lattice work of the bridge which serve to significantly interrupt views up and down the river, depending on which side of the bridge you are on. The site itself is characterised by pub paraphernalia including hard surfaced patios, car parking, external bar and thatched parasols that line the top of the bank which is well above the River Glen waterline. The opportunity, therefore, exists to redevelop this area and the pub in a manner that will enhance the character of the area and improve the amenity of those occupying adjacent dwellings.
- 4.11. The two detached dwellings have garaging, amenity space and are sufficiently separated from adjacent development and therefore provide

for a suitable layout having regard to the character of the area and the constraints of the site.

- 4.12. Overall, the amount of development proposed, together with the layout, work well on site and respond to the general grain of development in the area and therefore the proposal accords with local plan policy 2, 1).

Scale

- 4.13. The proposed conversion of the Inn into apartments has no impact in terms of scale as this element of the proposal can be accommodated within the existing building. An existing brick outbuilding which currently incorporates toilets will be demolished and a similar but smaller footprint building will be constructed to provide cycle and incidental storage for the occupiers of the apartments.
- 4.14. A 3 bed detached dwelling is proposed on the Stockhouse Lane frontage and this is essentially replacing an existing single storey brick outbuilding which is to be demolished. The dwelling will be 5.2m to the eaves and 8.4m to the ridge and has similar proportions and will occupy a similar position in the street scene as the dwelling to the west. The scale of this dwelling has been designed to compliment the existing grain of development along Stockhouse Lane and is compliant with local plan policy 2, 1).
- 4.15. The open beer garden and remaining car park area presents an opportunity to develop a number of riverside dwellings which will also have the benefit of the existing mooring on the River Glen. Although it would be possible to develop the site with more than two dwellings, it was felt that the current proposal provides for more space between buildings together with a better relationship with existing development, especially on Stockhouse Lane. On the southern side of the River Glen there is a Public Footpath with a number of mature trees and then a terrace of two storey dwellings fronting onto Surfleet Road. To the west of the site there are recent examples of riverside development which in one case is significantly closer to the river than that being proposed here. The proposed dwellings measure 5.3m to the eaves and 9.6m to the ridge.

4.16. Within the immediate vicinity of The Mermaid, there is a wide range of building styles and sizes, and it is considered that the proposal will compliment that variety.

Landscaping

4.17. Other than for the open beer garden, which is laid to lawn and two small hedges, there are no other soft landscape features within the site which is dominated by buildings and hard landscaping. The proposal will see the opportunity to introduce small areas of planting to soften the areas of parking and to provide a better environment for the occupiers of the apartments. There are small, landscaped areas immediately in front of three of the ground floor apartments and an area adjacent to the river. There is also easy access to the public footpath and the open countryside beyond.

4.18. The two riverside dwellings have good sized south facing gardens going down to the river and front gardens within which there will be domestic scale planting to suit.

Appearance

4.19. The proposed dwelling on the Stockhouse Lane frontage will be constructed in traditional brick with a tiled roof. The design is similar to that seen elsewhere along the Lane and complies with local plan policy 2, 2).

4.20. Rather than follow a traditional approach, the two dwellings on the riverside are more contemporary in their design with the use of wooden cladding, small areas of render and thin profile aluminium windows and door frames. Window openings are generally larger than standard to take advantage of the south facing aspect and views of the river. Each dwelling has a small, raised balcony with glazed balustrade. The principal rooms also face south towards the river.

Access

4.21. There is an existing access directly off Surfleet Road immediately adjacent to the bridge which is proposed to be closed off and used as pedestrian access to the apartments only. The sole vehicular access into the site will be via the Stockhouse Lane access which will be widened and visibility splays improved, following the removal of the buildings on either side.

- 4.22. Vehicle and cycle parking for both the apartments and the new build dwellings is in accordance with the required standards as set out in Policy 36 of the local plan.
- 4.23. In overall terms, the level of traffic movements associated with the current proposal is no greater than were The Mermaid to carry on being used a restaurant/pub with letting rooms and the proposal will result in an improvement in highway safety.
- 4.24. Lincolnshire County Council as local highway authority was informally consulted as part of the pre-application process and no objection was raised to the proposal.

5. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. Surfleet has no conservation area and only one Listed Building namely the Grade I Listed St Laurence Church. The church occupies a prominent location on the Station Road/Gosberton Road junction and views on the southern and northern approaches into the village are dominated by the church spire which is noticeably out of vertical. A number of large trees dominate the southern part of the churchyard.
- 5.2. The centre of Surfleet village is dominated by the main road running north-south and the iron road bridge which was constructed in 1884 and which spans the River Glen. The bridge has a dedicated pedestrian crossing which lies outside the ironwork.
- 5.3. The Mermaid Inn was historically a pair of semi-detached dwellings that occupies approximately 0.4ha alongside the River Glen, with a prominent frontage onto Gosberton Road and a secondary frontage on to Stockhouse Lane. Both dwellings were knocked together and converted into the Inn in 1920. Up until late 1940, there were also 3 quite substantial cottages alongside the river in the area that is now landscaped, laid to patio, and used in association with the Inn.
- 5.4. We have provided some historic Ordnance Survey extracts (Appendix B) which show the original building and the riverside cottages. Although the riverside cottages appear on the 1955 OS plan, they are no longer visible on the version published in 1956. However, the photograph below dated 1955 shows the cottages no longer standing. The difference between the photographs and the OS plans would appear to be down to the when the plans were published, as opposed to when they were actually drawn. The OS plans show development close to both Surfleet Road and the riverside. The old riverside wall, whilst still in situ, has more recently been altered with decorative castellations and an archway, together with a 9m floating mooring installed. There is an historic precedent for riverside development, significantly closer than proposed here and more recently, west of the site towards open countryside.
- 5.5. The setting of the church is dominated by the road on two of its boundaries and other than for views immediately in front of it, the views of the church are limited to glimpses of the spire. The proposed development on Stockhouse Lane will have no impact on the setting of the Listed Building due in the main to the lack of intervisibility between

the two buildings. The location of the new riverside dwellings will have the existing Mermaid building between them and the church. There will still be glimpses of the church spire much in the same way as there is today.

- 5.6. We conclude that there will be no impact on the setting of the heritage asset and the proposal therefore accords with local plan policy 29.

6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1. A Flood Risk Assessment has been produced which shows that the development is not at risk of flooding and that there will be no impact on other land uses or land users.
- 6.2. The development is classed a 'minor' and therefore there are no contributions associated with the proposal.
- 6.3. Our client is not aware that the single storey buildings to be demolished are used by protected species, however, notwithstanding the grant of planning permission, work on site has to have regard to the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 6.4. A dedicated point for refuse to be left on collection day is proposed on site and the carry distances involved comply with the Building Regulations Act.
- 6.5. There is a community defibrillator located on the single storey building located on the Stockhouse Lane frontage and it is understood that this will be relocated following consultations with Surfleet Parish Council.
- 6.6. There are no alterations proposed to the existing moorings/landing stage as part of this application.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. The application has been informed by positive pre-application consultation with the local planning authority and this informal advice is reproduced as Appendix A in this report. In addition, informal advice from the local highway authority concluded with there being no objection in principle to the proposal.
- 7.2. The re-use of The Mermaid has come about following the closure of the business coupled with an unsuccessful attempt to sell it as a going concern. The only interest has been from those looking to carry the similar sort of development to what is being proposed here.
- 7.3. A total of 5 apartments and 3 houses results in a form of development that is in keeping with the general grain of development in the area and the minimal changes to the principal building will ensure it retains its prominent position in the centre of the village.
- 7.4. There will be no impact on the setting of the Listed Building and no impact on existing development.
- 7.5. The proposal accords with the provisions of the development plan and is acceptable in all other respects.

APPENDIX A

Pre-Application Advice

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18th May 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

PLANNING: PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Reference: PE-00211-21 **Case Officer:** Sundas Shaban
Location: The Mermaid Inn, Surfleet Road Surfleet, Lincolnshire
Proposal: Change of use and redevelopment.

I write in response to your pre-application enquiry and apologise for the delay in responding.

I understand you are proposing the following at The Mermaid Inn:

- Change of use of existing building to 4no 2 bed and 1no 1 bed apartments with 10no parking spaces
- 2no 4 bedroom detached dwellings to the south with detached garages and 2no parking spaces for each dwelling
- 1no detached dwelling to the north with 2no parking spaces
- Bin storage building in the existing car park

Having considered the submitted plans I can advise that the site layout and level of development is appropriate for the site. The proposed flats within the existing building are well proportioned and meet the national space standards. The proposed new dwellings are well spaced, relating well to the site and are not considered to result in overdevelopment of the site.

Please note no consultation has taken place with Highways at this stage. Any formal application will require an assessment of the proposed parking/turning spaces and the visibility splays at the entrance/exit to the site.

With regards to neighbouring amenity the proposed flats are not considered to result in any additional significant impact compared to the existing use of the building. The proposed dwellings would have a back-to-back separation distance of approximately 25 metres which is considered sufficient in relation to the existing dwellings on Stockhouse Lane.

Given the site is within close proximity to listed buildings sympathetic design and use of materials would

be expected.

As such a formal application could be supported subject to agreement from Highways and the Conservation Officer.

This planning advice is given in good faith but is an officer opinion only and therefore is not binding on any formal decision the Council may make following the receipt of a planning application.

BUILDING REGULATIONS

The works that you are proposing may also require Building Regulations and this informal advice or any subsequent planning permission does not give authority under Building Regulations to commence work. Please contact the Building Control section for further information on 01775 764557

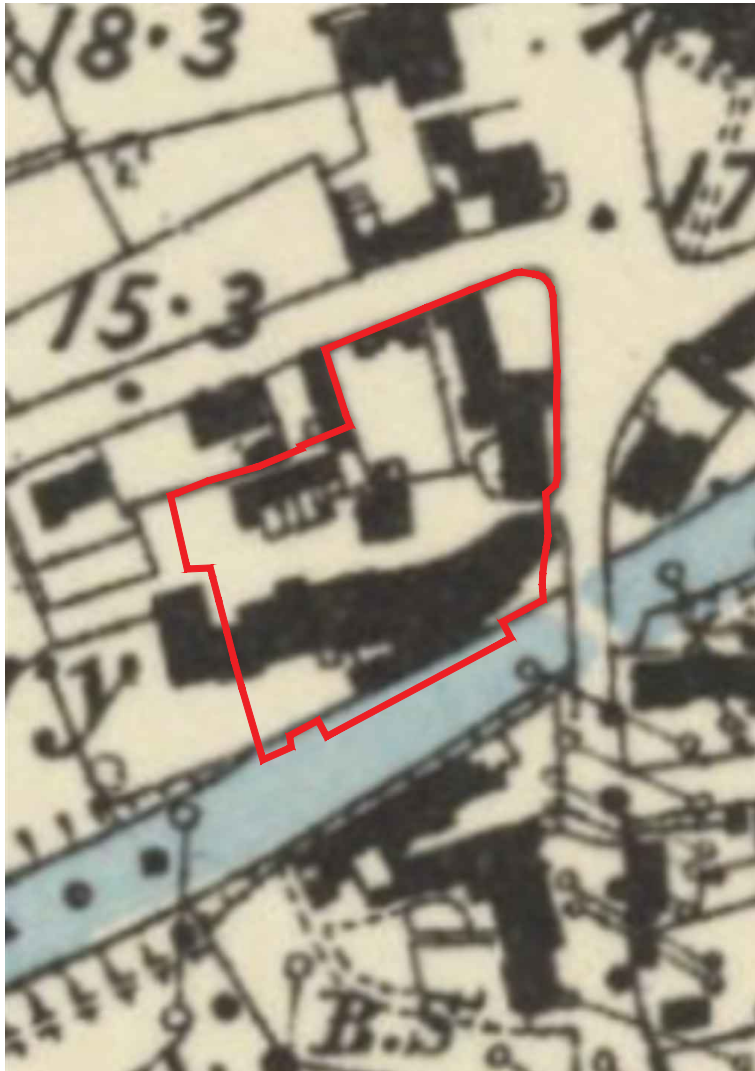
Yours faithfully

S. Shaban

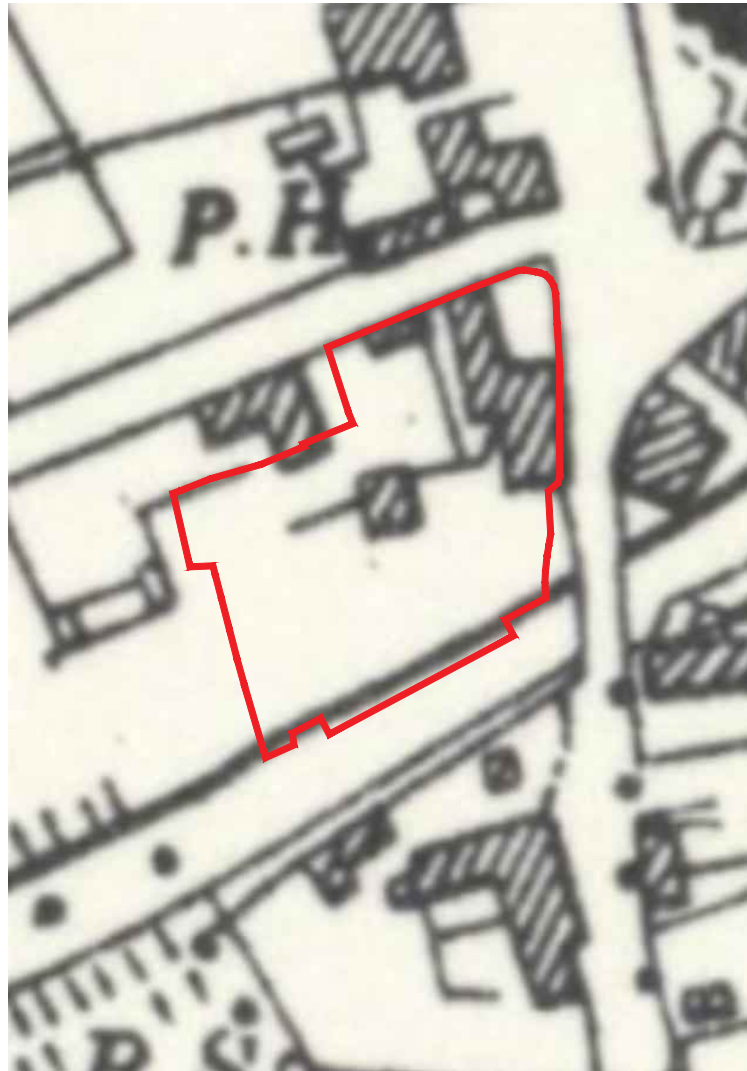
Sundas Shaban, Planning Officer

APPENDIX B

Historic OS Maps (drawing no. 1447-1_SK_LP02)



1887 Ordnance Survey map



1956 Ordnance Survey map



Notes

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Ordnance Survey Map

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Project

The Mermaid Inn
Surfleet

Drawing

Historic OS maps

Scale @ A4

NTS

Date

22/04/21

Drawn By

WW

Checked By

LMS

Job Number

1447-1

Status

SK

Purpose of Issue

Discussion

Drawing No.

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Rev

-



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