

## **Planning application 21/00102**

### **Response by Martley Parish Council**

The prolonged closure of the Crown public house in Martley has been a major loss to the community, while the rest of the site is an appalling eyesore in the centre of a rural village. Proposals for redevelopment are therefore welcome. However, the current proposals provide insufficient information to make a decision, and also include some major problems and inconsistencies.

#### **Conformity with SWDP and Neighbourhood Plan**

The plans contain no information about their conformity with the SWDP, and it is therefore not clear whether they meet the requirements of policies SWDP5 (green infrastructure) and SWDP13 (which specifies a density of 30 dwellings/ha). There is no consideration of the types of dwellings based on local data, as required by SWDP14. However, the proposals do meet SWDP15, which requires 20% of houses in small developments to be 'affordable'.

The plans also contain no information about conformity with the Martley, Knightwick and Doddenham Neighbourhood Plan. Policy MKD5 supports infill housing and the conversion and extension of existing buildings within the settlement boundary (which includes this proposed development). However, policy MKD8 protects designated green spaces from development 'except in very special circumstances'. One such space is the Crown Orchard, and the plans propose to develop half of this without any stated justification. Policy MKD7 requires that new development proposals demonstrate that they meet local housing need, including one or two-bedroom properties, houses suitable for elderly people close to key facilities, and self-build houses. The plans do include smaller properties but none specifically designed for the elderly. Policies MKD2, MKD3 and MKD4 relate to the character of new buildings, but elevations are not provided for the five proposed dwellings in the South of the site, and so it is not possible to make a judgement.

#### **The public house**

The plans propose to reduce this in size but to retain a kitchen and to maintain its existing function. The plans do not include any proposals for an outdoor or garden area, although this is now standard in most country pubs and is required for customers who are smokers. The limited parking area specified in the plans (the minimum required by the County Council) will also limit custom. We are aware that the owners have given verbal guarantees of the future of the Crown as a public house, but we would prefer to see these made explicit in the planning application. This is particularly important given the failure of the current owners to operate the Crown as a profitable concern.

#### **Conversion of pub extension**

The plans propose conversion of the Southern section of the Crown into two commercial properties, one of which would be a café. The latter would be an asset to Martley, but is not clear why this function could not be fulfilled by the Crown itself. The plans do not designate space within the units for a kitchen, washrooms or toilet. This means that staff and customers in these units would need to leave the building and enter the Crown. Unless the Crown is to be open at the same times as the commercial properties, the proposed development is therefore in contravention of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare)

Regulations 1992 – Regulation 20, Sanitary conveniences which states that: "Suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences shall be provided at readily accessible places".

### **Upstairs flat in the Crown**

The Parish Council supports this proposal, but is concerned about access. This is currently from within the Crown, with a metal fire escape from the upstairs flat to the alley between the Crown and the Central Garage. The planning application appears to propose that the fire escape becomes the main entrance to the upstairs flat. We are not clear whether this meets building regulations.

### **Two houses at rear of the Crown**

Neither of these 'apartments' has a garden, and the front doors open on the alley between the Crown and the Central Garage. The ground floor in Apartment 2 has little natural light.

### **Car park**

The application form states that the plans increase car parking from 25 to 33. But only 17 of these spaces are designated for non-residential use. The Transport Statement estimates that this meets minimum County Council requirements for the pub and café, which leaves no space designated for community use or for visitors to the new houses. Note that many local public houses attract customers during lunchtimes, which means that demand for car park spaces would coincide with those for people using the Central Garage and the village shop.

### **Other new houses and green space**

The plans propose to erect five houses at the South of the site, which would front directly on the planned green space. Four of the five houses would have back gardens leading to detached garages, all with dormer rooms and toilets. The Parish Council is concerned that these would at a later date be converted to small dormer bungalows or holiday lets, with major adverse implications for parking and drainage. The proposed five-bed house is an area identified in the Drainage Strategy as having a flood risk and the report suggests raising the ground-level at the Southern end of the site by one metre, sloping to current ground level at the North of the site. This would involve destroying the trees in the remaining part of the Crown Orchard. The report from the Land Drainage Partnership notes that raising the land would simply displace water to neighbouring properties.

The Masterplan shows a curved expanse of open space comprising the remains of the Crown Orchard (unless this is cleared as part of raising the level of the land) and a belt Northwards along the main road, comprising mature trees and a small pool. Yet the plan in Appendix F of the Drainage Strategy shows the same space occupied by a large SuDS pool. This is confirmed by the report from the Land Drainage Partnership, which also notes that any SuDS should be 5+ metres from the road (as required by Highways) and needs a minimum 3.5 metre margin. This means that the belt of green space would essentially be a SuDS pool next to an increasingly busy main road.

### **Conclusion**

Martley Parish Council therefore recommends that the District Council reject this planning application, and that the applicants be invited to revise their plans with the following aims:

1. To restore the full extent of the Crown Orchard as an open space accessible to the public (as was the case until the owners recently fenced it off), with an extension to the East to form an open green space. This would restore part of the former Crown Meadow, which was once a notable feature of the village.
2. The re-orientation of the two apartments at the rear of the Crown to face South, with the addition of small gardens in front of their new entrances. There may be room for an additional or two dwellings nearby in the areas designated as car parking spaces P1 to P10 on the proposed layout.
3. The proposed two commercial units at the South of the Crown be replaced by commercial space within the public house, to be accessed from within the building as well as having external entrances. The area immediately outside to the South could provide garden space for the Crown and any café (should this be provided).
4. The five proposed houses at the South end of the site should not be built, with the remaining space between the Crown and the public green space instead designated as a car park for users of the Crown and for general public use.

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