DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT incorporating Planning Statement

Change of use of Former Police Station and residential accommodation to 2no dwellinghouses.

At

Wilton Police Station
Russell Street
Wilton
Salisbury
SP2 0BG

For Gainsborough Group Construction Ltd

1. Introduction

The application seeks change of use of the former police station on Russell Street, Wilton and residential accommodation to two dwellinghouses.

The site has been redundant as an active police station for some time. Wilton Police Station closed in January 2020 just before Covid but reopened on a temporary basis to facilitate the spreading out of operational policing services. The property accommodated operational policing services which provided for members of the public attending by appointment. There has not been a staffed walk up front counter service at the property for over 10 years. The building ceased all operations in December 2022.

The site has been acquired by the applicant as part of a process of centralisation of police resources in the county.

It is proposed that the conversion will require little by way of enabling works as the office area possesses all the necessary facilities such as WC and kitchen to allow a conversion to a dwelling and therefore the application is for a straight change of use. Indeed prior to being converted to the police station the building was in use as two dwellings. It is therefore the intention of this application to return the building to its original use.

The site still lends itself to its original use through its position surrounded by residential development on a narrow side road within the village of Wilton. It is difficult to see how it could be utilised for any other purpose, whether that be community based or commercial. Access to the courtyard is restricted and could not take any more traffic than that experienced during the use by the police force, which would seem to eliminate any community use, as nurseries/drop in centres generally generate a good deal of traffic. Likewise commercial use would need to be appropriate in close proximity to existing residential development which restrict use to Class E. The site has been marketed at a reasonable rate by the former owner, the only interested parties being those looking to return the building to residential use.

2. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF is framed as a positive, responsive and enabling document, seeking to facilitate sustainable development and growth, supporting and securing, rather than impeding, sustainable economic growth and ensuring the planning system operates to this end; indeed, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. Applications for sustainable development should be approved wherever possible, consistent with an overarching approach that demands 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It advocates a proactive, creative and solution-seeking approach to planning.

This proposal optimises the development potential of the site, whilst taking into account the density of the site surrounds and will provide a well-designed scheme that sits comfortably within the plot and will be in keeping with the appearance and massing of surrounding buildings and as such, is considered to be consistent with National Planning Policy.

Local Planning Policy

The following policies are recognised as particularly relevant to the proposal.

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)

CP1: Settlement Strategy
CP2: Delivery Strategy
CP33: Spatial Strategy: Wilton Community Area
CP35: Existing Employment Land
CP41: Sustainable Construction and Low Carbon Energy
CP42: Standalone renewable Energy Installations
CP45: Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs
CP50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
CP57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
CP58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment
CP60: Sustainable Transport
CP61: Transport and New Development
CP64: Demand Management
CP67: Flood Risk

Prior to conversion to a police station the property was in residential use. It is therefore proposed to return the building to that use, split into 2 dwellings, one either side of the central courtyard access.

As set out in the preamble to CP35 in the WCS:

in some circumstances it may be appropriate to allow for the redevelopment (in whole or part) of existing employment sites for an alternative use, particularly where the site is not required to remain in its current use to support the local economy in the area.

With the closure of the police station and consolidation of that service off-site the site is no longer required to serve its current role, as that is provided elsewhere. As set out in CP35, one of the criteria for support of such a proposal is that:

vi. *The change of use is to facilitate the relocation of an existing business from buildings that are no longer fit for purpose to more suitable premises elsewhere within a reasonable distance to facilitate the retention of employment.*

Application 16/07363/FUL for the Integration of police station into existing office space for police operational and administrative purposes including accommodating both a community policing team (whose functions will include community policing and responding to incidents), and an enquiry office facility at the Council House, Bourne Hill enabled the police force to relocate within a reasonable area and for officers and administration staff to retain their positions. Whilst the sale of the Wilton Police Station followed the relocation, due to the nature of the police service, how it operates and how it is funded, the sale of the property will help facilitate the costs of this move.

Therefore we consider that change of use to residential meets with the aspirations of CP35.

FLOOD RISK

The site sits within Flood Zone 3 and a Flood Risk Assessment is provided with this application. As the application is a change of use it is considered that it falls within the caveat set out in footnote 55 and 56 in relation to paragraph 168 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

168. Applications for some minor development and changes of use [56] should not be subject to the sequential or exception tests but should still meet the requirements for site-specific flood risk assessments set out in footnote 55.

(55) A site-specific flood risk assessment should be provided for all development in Flood Zones 2 and 3. In Flood Zone 1, an assessment should accompany all proposals involving: sites of 1 hectare or more; land which has been identified by the Environment Agency as having critical drainage problems; land identified in a strategic flood risk assessment as being at increased flood risk in future; or land that may be subject to other sources of flooding, where its development would introduce a more vulnerable use. ↩

(56) This includes householder development, small non-residential extensions (with a footprint of less than 250m^2) and changes of use; except for changes of use to a caravan, camping or chalet site, or to a mobile home or park home site, where the sequential and exception tests should be applied as appropriate. ↩

Therefore a sequential test is not required for this application. A site specific flood risk assessment has been attached to this submission. It is considered that as flood mitigation measures can be incorporated into the conversion of the existing building, such as a first floor capable of being utilised as a refuge in the event of a severe flood, raised sockets, plinths for electrical goods etc and that flood alert information and contacts can be provided, it is a suitable site for residential conversion.

3. Access

There is no change to access as a result of this application. The existing central vehicle access to the rear courtyard will be maintained. This access will be shared between the two properties and parking will be provided in this courtyard for both properties.

Cycle parking can be provided within the courtyard at a level of one cycle space per bedspace.

Parking provision can be provided in line with the county standard of 2 parking spaces for a 3 bedroom property.

Due to the proposed change of use it is not considered that there will be any increase in vehicular traffic utilising the entrance to Russell Street over that historically present. Indeed the proposal is to return the building to its original use as two dwellings. Considering that County Highways had concerns about the increase in traffic as a result of the conversion to a police station there should be no concerns over returning the building to its previous and less intensive use.

4. Scale & Appearance

There will be no change to the scale or appearance of the building as a result of this application.

5. Landscaping

Any changes to landscaping will be minimal. Parking and turning will be provided for both properties. Any space available for soft landscaping will be utilised.

6. Layout

There will be no changes to the internal layout, merely the use of the existing rooms.

7. Conclusion

The building subject of this change of use application was originally two dwellings, one of which was converted to a police station in 1990. That use has now ceased and the property has been disposed of in order to consolidate police services within the county.

Whilst the building sits within Flood Zone 3 its nature as a 2 storey structure allows for large refuge space on the first floor.

The proposal will make the most effective use of the existing building, which was formerly residential in use and sits within a residential area. Therefore it is considered that a return to such use is the most common sense option for the site, as it will maintain low, residential style levels of amenity impact on neighbouring properties and highway infrastructure.

It should also be noted that the closure of Wilton Police Station has facilitated the relocation of police services in the area to Bourne Hill in Salisbury and therefore there is no loss of employment as a direct result of this change of use.