

**East Area Planning Committee**

7 October 2015

**Application Number:** 15/02171/FUL

**Decision Due by:** 23rd September 2015

**Proposal:** Installation of public artwork and seating

**Site Address:** Blewitt Court Oxford Road Littlemore Oxford

**Ward:** Littlemore Ward

**Agent:** Mr David Henwood

**Applicant:**

---

**Recommendation:**

APPLICATION BE APPROVED

For the following reasons:

1 The Council considers that the proposal accords with the policies of the development plan as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. Any material harm that the development would otherwise give rise to can be offset by the conditions imposed.

2 The Council considers that the proposal, subject to the conditions imposed, would accord with the special character and appearance of the conservation area. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity.

3 The Council considers that the proposal, subject to the conditions imposed, would accord with the special character, setting, features of special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity.

4 Officers have considered carefully all objections to these proposals. Officers have come to the view, for the detailed reasons set out in the officers report, that the objections do not amount, individually or cumulatively, to a reason for refusal and that all the issues that have been raised have been adequately addressed and the relevant bodies consulted.

subject to the following conditions, which have been imposed for the reasons stated:-

1 Development begun within time limit

- 2 Develop in accordance with approved plans
- 3 Samples in Conservation Area Littlemore

### **Main Local Plan Policies:**

#### **Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016**

**CP1** - Development Proposals  
**CP6** - Efficient Use of Land & Density  
**CP8** - Design Development to Relate to its Context  
**CP9** - Creating Successful New Places  
**CP10** - Siting Development to Meet Functional Needs  
**CP14** - Public Art  
**HE3** - Listed Buildings and Their Setting  
**HE7** - Conservation Areas

### **Core Strategy**

**CS18**\_ - Urban design, town character, historic env  
**CS19**\_ - Community safety

### **West End Area Action Plan**

### **Barton AAP – Submission Document**

### **Sites and Housing Plan**

### **Other Material Considerations:**

National Planning Policy Framework  
This application is in or affecting the Littlemore Conservation Area.  
Planning Practice Guidance  
Littlemore Conservation Area Draft Area Appraisal

### **Relevant Site History:**

None

### **Representations Received:**

Sundial House, Cowley Rd Littlemore, 2 Blewitt Court, 7 Blewitt Court, Oriel College,  
72 Oxford Road, 4 Oxford Road, 12 Dudgeon Drive, St Vicarage St Nicholas Road

### **Summary of Comments**

- Applaud anyone's efforts to introduce an art piece into the environment
- Proposed will serve no purpose not already catered for - there are already adequate benches in the vicinity for people to sit and smoke drugs and drink alcohol.

- Seating next to busy traffic/fumes
- It is too close to a busy road
- The structure looks perfect for either climbing up and hanging off or pushing - an impressive amount of leverage could be gained by pushing horizontally near the ends of the arms and thus weakening the structure.
- The piece would also be brilliant for hanging stuff off
- This area attracts enough antisocial behaviour as it is without providing another shelter for them all to congregate.
- Not impressed by the art work: the praying hands look like a tattoo that lots of people are now wearing.
- dislike the appearance, and it looks like something that kids would be tempted to climb on
- Not wish any social sculpture in place outside our front door
- the structure is wooden, so will require maintenance, for which no budget has been identified
- will therefore either cost the council more than planned over time or it will quickly degrade and become unsightly and unsafe. If the council wishes to improve the quality of this area (which would be very desirable), it would do much better, for instance, to plant a living tree.
- This ridiculous structure will do absolutely nothing to enhance what is already a beautiful environment.
- This is preposterous waste of money that could be used to much better effect. If the commissioning process had been properly carried out, a work of art of some merit might have been chosen.
- The £17,000 which the Beenhams developer had to pay as Section 106 money would have gone a long way to cover the cost of this change (traffic calming measures)
- The piece of artwork will cause an obstruction to cars coming down the Oxford Road towards the village and turning left, at the mini-roundabout, into the Cowley Road.
- It will `overload` the pavement. The flower bed is a much more attractive amenity and less obtrusive.

#### **Statutory and Internal Consultees:**

No comments received.

#### **Issues:**

Visual Impact  
Impact on Conservation Area  
Impact on setting of Listed Building  
Crime Prevention  
Maintenance

#### **Officers Assessment:**

#### **Site Description**

1. The application site is situated on the corner of Oxford Road, Cowley Road and Sandford Road, adjacent to the mini roundabout in Littlemore, on an area of land that fronts Blewitt Court.
2. Blewitt Court is a flatted development of three storeys high and sits in a very prominent position on the triangular site between Oxford Road and Cowley Road. The building was constructed as the Marlborough Head public house and despite its conversion into residential use; Blewitt Court has retained many of its original architectural features including doorways and windows. Due to its positioning, Blewitt Court forms a terminating view when looking north along Sandford Road and for this reason, it forms a local landmark.

### **Proposal**

3. The application is seeking permission for the erection of a community art project in the form of a seating and rest area depicting pictorial chronology periods and people of Littlemore. This will take the form of a sculptured tree in wood.

### **Background**

4. Littlemore Parish Council, in June 2014, set out a brief for a piece of public art work that should be functional and include a shelter and seating area which should also reflect the history of Littlemore in a contemporary and suitable style. The artwork designed in response to this brief will take the form of a sculpture built from two types of wood, with steel core. Some sections of the wood will include engravings of historical events. The location of the site for the art work was decided by the Parish Council.
5. The applicant states in their design and access statement that the design has been subject to extensive public consultation, including addressing how the proposal meets local needs, the most appropriate use of the public space, the artwork's content, and the overall concept and design of the sculpture. Information for the project was pulled together with the help of the local History Society as well as conversations with local people. Relevant local feedback has been taken into account, and consultation with a number of local groups and schools helped the development of the project. Feedback was also taken from the site itself. In August 2014 a three-sided board went up with a suggestion box encouraging feedback or suggestions for the art project. Results of the public consultation have not been quantified.

### **Assessment**

6. Throughout the course of history, towns and public spaces have been enhanced by the use of decorative arts, crafts and design, from historic monuments and sculpture to innovative designs of signs, gateways, paving and the interpretation of locations. The effects of both temporary and permanent Public Art not only creates this long lasting social and cultural legacy but has an impact of which can be seen in the growth of creative industries, tourism, and enhancing perceptions of an area and positive

economic effect. The aim in providing public art is to improve the quality of the environment to produce an environment which is more stimulating and which will enhance the visual impact and provide heritage of significance for future generations to enjoy. Public art adds to the vitality and vibrancy of an area.

7. With regards to policy CS18 of the Oxford Core Strategy (OCS) this states development proposals should respect and draw inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment (above and below ground), responding positively to the character and distinctiveness of the locality creating a strong sense of place and contributing to an attractive public realm.
8. Policy CP14 of the Oxford Local Plan (OLP) states public art, integrated with buildings and landscape, is an important cultural asset, contributing to public enjoyment of Oxford. It can take a wide variety of forms, such as paintings, sculpture, murals, memorials, street furniture, and facilities for performance arts or cultural events. Proposed public art should be accessible for public enjoyment, enhance and enliven the environment, and contribute to the cultural identity of its location. The Council will seek public art that is original, stimulating and of lasting value to both the development and the cultural life of Oxford.
9. The principle of supporting the erection of the proposed piece of public art work is considered acceptable as it contributes to promoting and securing public art that enhance the quality of the built environment, help create a 'sense of place' and local distinctiveness and provides opportunities, particularly for local artists and craftspeople, to participate and add to the quality of life in Oxford City. The benefits are shared and enjoyed by residents and visitors equally. Officers are of the opinion that the proposal meets the needs of policy CS18 of the OCS and CP14 of the OLP.
10. The site is situated within Littlemore Conservation Area therefore policy HE7 of the OLP applies. Policy HE7 states that planning permission will only be granted for development that preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the conservation areas or their setting.
11. With regards to the public realm the Littlemore Conservation Area Draft Area Appraisal identifies, despite the lack of public open space within the conservation area, the public realm is of a high standard, due in part to the strong rural character and the retained historic features. Opportunities identified in the Littlemore Conservation Area Draft Area Appraisal include improvements to the public realm e.g. resurfacing of roads and pavements, reinstatement of stone kerbs etc. Officers are of the opinion that the proposal would add to the public realm in a positive manner.
12. Opposite the site is St Mary and St Nicholas's church which is listed as Grade II\*. In this respect policy HE3 of the OLP will apply and it states planning permission will only be granted for development which is appropriate in terms of its scale and location and which uses materials and colours that respect the character of the surroundings, and have due regard to the setting of any listed building.

13. St Mary and St Nicholas's church benefits from a soft green setting created by the well treed graveyard. The stone boundary wall clearly defines the plot whilst enclosing the churchyard with the lych gate adding to the intimate feeling of the space. The gate opening creates framed views of the church. Originally sited in a much more open position along with the vicarage and the small school, the setting to the church has changed with much of the surrounding land having been developed. As a result of the containment of the church site, the more recent surrounding developments have not unduly impacted upon the character of the church and its immediate setting. This can also be said for the proposal.
14. The Crime Prevention Design Advisor for Oxfordshire at Thames Valley Police was consulted at the pre-application stage; no comments have been received on the planning application although the design is no different. Comments were positive including: even though this could become a gathering site it would create more activity and more self-policing on the street; would it encourage climbing? Maybe but no more than any other many items along a street; could it be used by skateboarders? Yes, but unlikely. The outer edge of the 'bench' could be rounded but laminate wood is not normally a good skateboard surface. The bench could also be broken up with handrails which would make it easier for the elderly or disabled sit up and get off such a bench.
15. A maintenance schedule has been submitted as part of the planning application. The structure will be maintained by the Parish Council and will be checked on a monthly basis for general wear and tear and annual for a more detailed inspection.

### **Conclusion:**

16. Members are recommended to approve the application subject to the conditions suggested.

### **Human Rights Act 1998**

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions. Officers have considered the potential interference with the rights of the owners/occupiers of surrounding properties under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Act and consider that it is proportionate.

Officers have also considered the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol caused by imposing conditions. Officers consider that the conditions are necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others and to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest. The interference is therefore justifiable and proportionate.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

### **Background Papers:**

**Contact Officer:** Lisa Green

**Extension:** 2614

**Date:** 24th September 2015

This page is intentionally left blank