

# Agenda Item 5

**West Area Planning Committee**

12<sup>th</sup> December 2012

**Application No.** 12/02336/LBC & 12/02335/FUL

**Decision Due by:** 29 November 2012

**Proposal:** Erection of gates and redecoration of external walls. Removal and replacement of suspended ceiling in bar area, formation of new ground floor doorway to rear stairwell. (Amended plans) (Amended description)

**Site Address:** Former Elm Tree PH, 95 Cowley Road, OX4 1HR

**Ward:** St Clement's

**Agent:** Kemp And Kemp Property Consultants **Applicant:** Spice Island Leisure Limited

**Recommendation:** Grant listed building consent

## **Reasons for Approval**

- 1 The Council considers that the proposal accords with Government advice on the management of the historic environment as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. Any harm to the heritage assets that the works would otherwise give rise to can be justified and mitigated by detailed design, which the conditions imposed would control.
- 2 The impact on the significance of the heritage significance is considered acceptable and justified by the public benefits of the proposed works. Overall the benefits that will be delivered, ensuring the building's continued use, encouraging the public's understanding and enjoyment of the heritage assets, justify granting listed building consent.
- 3 The Council has tried to work positively and proactively with the applicant(s) and their agent(s), including the offer of pre-application advice, discussions during the course of determination of the application and the opportunity to submit amended proposals where appropriate, in order to implement planning policy objectives, secure sustainable development and satisfy the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **Conditions**

1. Development begun within time limit
2. Develop in accordance with approved plns
3. Paint sample on site
4. Colour and finish of timber gate

**Other Material Considerations:** none

## **Public Consultation**

Oxford Civic Society – 2 letters have been received. The first letter outlines they are happy to see this being properly cared for appreciated and reused. The removal of the A boards are welcome. They question the appropriateness of the red neon

signage and the style of lettering of the proposed type 2 sign. Also question the choice of grey to redecorate the render when white and light coloured stonework are characteristic of buildings of this period.

The second letter received about electronic gates and railings is confusing (planning reference does not correspond with site address). Nevertheless it does state that the 'lock up look' can be very unpleasant, unfriendly and might encourage burglaries.

#### **Private Individuals:-**

- Effect on adjoining properties
- Effect on character of area
- Effect on existing community facilities
- Effect on traffic
- Noise and disturbance
- Parking provision
- Object to red neon sign – too large and out of character with listed building and area. Appropriateness of neon lighting on a listed building is debatable
- Concerns raised about size of mural signage and lettering
- Change of use required from restaurant to bar
- Applicant to be congratulated on wishing to renovate badly treated building
- Object to blue/grey redecoration of render

#### **Relevant planning history**

- **Approved applications:**
  - 00/02016/L - Internal alterations to form one additional bedroom, one additional bathroom at first floor level & enlarge door opening at ground floor level. 2 x hay basket planters, wall washer luminaires, externally illuminated fascia signs & amenity - approved
  - 00/02017/AH - Two externally illuminated fascia signs below first floor windows, and two non-illuminated amenity boards to external elevations - approved
  - 92/00770/L - Listed Building consent for internal alterations to provide additional ladies W.C., enlargement of bar and fire precaution works - approved
  - 04/01702/LBC – 4 flood lights, 1 lantern to entrance, externally illuminated gable lettering and 3 spot light illuminating sign boards - withdrawn
  - 04/01703/adv – externally illuminated gable lettering and 3 spot light illuminated sign boards - withdrawn
  - 12/02334/adv - withdrawn

#### **Officers Assessment:**

1. No 95 is situated on the north side of Cowley Road at the junction of Cowley Road and Jeune Street. The building is two storeys, plus basement and is set at an angle to Cowley Road
2. No 95 Cowley Road was built as an inn, known as the Elm Tree in 1899 for the independent brewery owned by Joel Evans, later bought by Morrell's Brewery which once stood behind the Elm Tree before the Penultimate Picture Palace cinema was built in 1910. This building replaced an earlier building on the site built in 1866 also called the Elm Tree, named after the last Elm tree which once stood outside the inn<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Marriott, Oxford Pubs Past and Present, 1978, p39.

3. The building was designed by Oxford Architect Henry Thomas Hare. Hare designed a number of buildings in Oxford, including Oxford Town Hall and 65 Cornmarket, now occupied by HSBC. Hare later became President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, R.I.B.A from 1917-1919.
4. As with many of HT Hare's buildings, No 95 Cowley Road uses historic detail for decoration and is in the Arts and Crafts style. The building is roughcast render with a steep pitched tiled roof and sits on a stone plinth. It has a central bay with two projecting cross wings, set at different angles to the street. The main entrance is at the front of the building in the middle of the central bay and is framed by two distinctively tall rendered symmetrical pillared chimney stacks.
5. Much of the original 1899 exterior frontage survives including the distinctive Rounded headed projecting stone porch hood and stone fascia panel above the front door.
6. Either side of the central doorway are two 5 light rectangular leaded cross-windows with Ovolo moulded stone mullions and transoms, similar to those at Oxford Town Hall. Elsewhere on the building this same Ovolo moulding has been replicated in timber rather than stone. Above the main entrance is a large octagonal pitched dormer again with 6 rectangular leaded lights with glazing. A small pitched dormer provides light to the main staircase at the rear of the building.
7. The main living accommodation is on the first floor and a series of partitions divide up the bar area on the ground floor. Internally there is an attractive winder staircase with a sturdy flat topped newel post. Original rooms on the first floor survive although there have been some interventions in the form of partitions and most of the doors have been lost. Many of the fireplaces upstairs survive.

**Heritage Significance:**

8. No 95 Cowley Road is grade II listed and is one of the most distinctive buildings along Cowley Road and is a part of the history of development of the street. The building forms part of the collection of listed buildings at the junction of Jeune Street and Cowley Road and makes a positive contribution to the street scene, highly valued by local residents.
9. The building has aesthetic and historic value, designed by well known Oxford architect of HT Hare who is also of national importance. It is an accomplished design incorporating architectural elements that are distinctively part of the Arts and Crafts palette, derived from vernacular motifs, traditional building techniques and adoption of asymmetrical compositions. The design and composition of the building helps understanding of Victorian values and perceptions of good quality design in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, for respectable public houses.

### **Brief description of proposals:**

**Amended plans received 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012 which seek to address concerns raised by officers and the public. These applications no longer propose any advertisements which will be the subject of a separate application to follow in due course. Works proposed as part of these applications are as follows:**

- Erection of 2.2m wide timber security gate fronting Jeune Street
- Removal of existing timber signage and lettering
- Redecoration of exterior render from cream to light grey (Farrow and Ball Skimming Stone)
- Redecoration of windows and downpipes from red to dark grey (Farrow and Ball Dove Tale)
- Internal alterations to remove existing suspended ceiling in bar area and replace with shallower ceiling to conceal electrical wiring.
- Remove modern partitioning and reinstate doorway in rear bar as a fire escape and insertion of new fire door
- New external lighting to frontage
- No neon, timber or mural signage is proposed as part of this application

### **Impact on heritage assets:**

10. The building has been empty for over a year and repairs are required to windows and roofs. Repair work is also required to the chimneys including re-pointing and re-rendering. New owners wish to carry out the repairs and continue the use of the building for the purpose for which it was originally designed. .
11. Re-opening the doorway from the rear bar to the staircase lobby responds to the history of the place and the original design intent and are changes that are considered acceptable to improve circulation and means of escape in case of fire. The new fire door is modern but seeks to replicate the design of the remaining historic door on the first floor balancing the architectural qualities of the building with user needs.
12. The existing suspended ceiling in the front bar is deeper than it needs to conceal electrical wiring and pipework. The new ceiling will be higher and less visible than the existing suspended ceiling. This will achieve a more integrated and discreet means of enclosing necessary electrical wiring from public view. The removal of existing modern partitioning and shelving in the rear serving area and insertion of new shelving will rationalise existing provision.
13. The side passage between the cinema and No 95 is used as a means of escape for cinema users and removal of bins. The insertion of new timber gates to the side passage will prohibit access to the passage and improve security for both sites. The new gates have been simply designed with vertical boarding, using good quality timber. They will be set back from the street to take account of highway concerns and require the minimum of fixings to avoid damage to historic fabric.
14. The existing paint scheme is modern and is in need of redecoration. The colour proposed to redecorate existing exterior paintwork is a muted light grey. The windows and downpipes will be painted a dark grey to contrast with the render and will echo the colour of the leaded glazing. This is considered acceptable.

**Conclusion**

Internal alterations seek to better reveal features and improve layout and functionality as originally designed and reverse later inappropriate interventions to building and will continue the use of the building as intended.

Officers are satisfied that need for a gate to the side passage is justified and its design and construction discrete. The redecoration of exterior paintwork is subtle and appropriate.

Approval is recommended

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