

**Land rear of The Oaks, High Street, Thorpe-le-Soken**

**Demolition of former pizza parlour building and  
replacement with a private amenity space**

## **Heritage Statement**



**August 2021**

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This Heritage Statement is in support of a full planning application for the replacement of an outbuilding with a private amenity space at the rear of The Oaks, High Street, Thorpe-le-Soken. This statement is provided to assist in the consideration of the planning application for the proposed development on a site that is within a Conservation Area and within the curtilage of a listed building.

1.2 This Statement should be read as part of the application. It includes details on the site and its surroundings, the design and layout of the intended scheme, how it relates to its context and how it meets with the requirements of adopted and emerging planning policies. It is considered that the statement accords with the advice contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance and The Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

## **2.0 Context of Site**

2.1 The Oaks is a double bay fronted two storey dwelling located on the corner of Mill Lane and the High Street. It dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and originally comprised two dwellings. It is a grade II listed building, added to the list in 1987. At that time, it was known as The Oaks Restaurant and The Old Bakehouse, the latter which was contained within the western half of the original pair. Both properties have been much altered at the front, with ungainly 20<sup>th</sup> century bay windows with modern casements. Most of the property, both internally and externally, has otherwise survived, albeit much altered because of its historic use as a restaurant.

2.2 The rear garden of the property tapers out in to Mill Lane, leading to a single storey block-built part rendered outbuilding with a shallow pitched roof. The building extends the full depth of the site. This building has a low ridged roof with corrugated sheet panels. It was formerly used as 'Piggy's Pizza', a pizza parlour operating as an outshot of the main restaurant. The use of the outbuilding as a retail outlet dates to at least 1990. Subsequently, the restaurant became The Prince of India until the business closed in 2012 and planning permission was granted for conversion to a single dwelling. The current occupants purchased the site in 2014.

2.3 The change of use and refurbishment of the main building has been completed, although work to the rear of the main building has stalled. The rear garden is enclosed while the outbuilding remains unused and is hazardous. To the south of the outbuilding is a further strip of land owned by the applicants, but this is subject of a right of way to the rear of a neighbouring dwelling.

2.4 The site is within the settlement boundary of Thorpe-le-Soken and within a designated Conservation Area. Mill Lane is an unadopted road with a mix of housing types including bungalows, terraces, and detached 1.5 and larger 2 storey dwellings. The lane is also a public footpath. The property immediately to the south, Eversley, is a more modern chalet style dwelling.

### **3.0 Proposed Development**

3.1 The scheme is to replace the existing outbuilding with a building that is to be used as private amenity space. The building would be in the same position as the existing building with an identical footprint. The scale and appearance of the building would be as existing, however will be more aesthetically pleasing. It would be modest, with an outdoor living / garden room, garage, shower/wc, gymnasium and hot tub area all for sole use by the main dwelling. There would be two flat roof lanterns to allow light to the internal spaces. The northern and southern elevations have also been kept as simple as possible. The southern window and garage door would face on to the existing driveway while the northern windows would face towards The Oaks.

3.2 Two off street parking spaces for the occupants of The Oaks will be proposed (one garaged and one adjacent to the southern boundary wall).

3.3 The external elevation materials will comprise of rendered blockwork and cladding walls and flat roof material. Timber joinery would be used throughout. The existing vehicular access/right of way will remain unaffected. On its merits, the demolition of an unsightly, inappropriate feature within the conservation area and its replacement with a more sympathetically designed amenity space is considered to represent a distinct improvement to both the character of the conservation area and the setting of the listed building. This view is supported by the officers delegated report from a previous submitted application in 2013, when it was stated that the 'existing unsightly buildings to the rear of the site will be demolished resulting in significant enhancement to the setting of the listed building and appearance of the conservation area'.

### **4.0 The Proposed Development and Assessment of Heritage Significance**

4.1 The aim of this assessment is to identify heritage assets within proximity to the proposed development site, to describe that which is significant about them, and then to identify how the proposed development will impact on that significance both directly and indirectly. Heritage assets within 150m of the proposed development site include the Grade II Mill Barn Farm at the end of Mill Lane, the Grade II\* St Michael's Church to the east, and along High Street there are two other Grade II Listed Buildings near the subject site.

4.2 An outbuilding is apparent on the 1958 Ordnance Survey to the rear of The Oaks. However, the shape and form of the building shown is not consistent with the existing structure. Having regard to the relatively modern form of construction and nature of materials used, it is extremely unlikely that the building can be regarded as 'curtilage listed'.



4.3 The proposed development site lies within the Conservation Area of the village of Thorpe-le-Soken. A Conservation Area Review of Thorpe-le-Soken was undertaken in March 2006, although a Management Plan has not been prepared. The subject site is located within Mill Lane Sub Area 1 and is described as follows:

Sub area 1A: Mill Lane

*“...This is an extension of the older part of the village but with greater informality. The lane is a roughly surfaced public footpath, and leads past simply-detailed individual houses with roofs parallel or perpendicular to the lane, at first within well-defined plots Site 8 lining both sides of the lane. A pronounced dogleg closes views from the High Street and leads to a more informal area defined to the east by the remnant of Mill Meadow backed by the mature trees associated with the churchyard and the cemetery. Views northwards are presided over by the church tower. The houses on the west side are more varied, with two new ostentatious dwellings: front curtilage boundaries have generally disappeared, and the gradual loss of enclosure gives attractively-filtered views out to open countryside past the roundhouse the former mill and Mill Barn Farmhouse...*”

4.4 Various images displayed at the end of the Conservation Area Review document show the western side of Mill Lane, describing it as *“Houses on the west side of Mill Lane at its northern end retain simplicity of form and details. Other sections of the lane are more varied, with some large modern houses which contain references to historic styles without attempting to reflect the character of Thorpe.”* The building subject of this application is also highlighted as photograph No.22 and captioned *“Mill Lane has a definite informal quality which makes an attractive contrast with the High Street. Even so, its junction with the High Street could be more attractively handled, with buildings surfaces and boundaries co-ordinated in this very public view from the main road”*.



4.5 The impact of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage assets of Mill Barn Farm and St. Michael's Church, and on the setting of the Conservation Area in this immediate locality, is the most relevant to this assessment. It is submitted that the proposed development will not have any impact on the significance of the other listed buildings due to the distance between, the limited relationship with them and the fact that the building is essentially the same in terms of footprint but of far superior build quality to the existing outbuilding. However, the proposal will be conspicuous within the rear garden of The Oaks and in terms of the appearance of the Conservation Area. This impact will be limited as the proposal will be replacing a building of considerably inferior design.

4.6 The proposed dwelling is of a design and scale that is compatible with the buildings and spaces at the rear of Mill Lane and will be seen as merely a secondary outbuilding. The materials of the proposed dwelling are newly rendered blockwork and cladding, and therefore will be a significant gain in terms of improving the visual appearance of the area.

## **5.0 Other Material Considerations**

### **5.1 Flooding**

The site is not within an area which is susceptible to flooding.

### **5.2 Highways**

The access driveway is already in use serving the neighbour's building. With the extent and nature of vehicle movements involved, and the fact that the dwelling will itself have parking provision for two vehicles, the level of conflict will be extremely limited.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

6.1 The site lies within the settlement boundary of Thorpe-le-Soken and is considered a sustainable location for development in the adopted and emerging local plans due to the transport links and the number of amenities and services available. An assessment of the proposed development on heritage assets of the locality including the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area has been carried out. It is submitted that the proposed development will have positive benefits on the identified heritage assets, with considerable improvement to the setting of both the listed building and wider conservation area. The site is identified in the Conservation Area Review as requiring a more sensitive approach, which can finally be secured through the provision of this amenity building. The proposal will not cause any conflict or loss of amenity for neighbouring properties. As such, the presumption in favour of development applies as set out within the NPPF.