

Planning Statement

(Including Design, Access & Viability)

Change of Use/Conversion of the Noel Arms Public House to
Residential use consisting of
6No Apartments including associated parking and amenity space.

The Noel Arms Public House
2 Bridge Street
Langham
Rutland
LE15 7HU

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PLANNING STATEMENT

Document Reference 23-012-PS

This Planning Statement forms part of a detailed planning application for Change of Use/conversion of the Noel Arms Public House to residential, consisting of 3No 2-bedroom and 3No 1-bedroom apartments with associated parking and amenity space. Account has been taken of the NPPF, Core Strategy and the Neighbourhood Plan.

LOCATION

The site is located towards the centre of Langham. The site lies wholly within the Langham Conservation Area. (the CA has purple outline with the site marked with yellow asterisk). The pink outline covers an Article 4 direction.

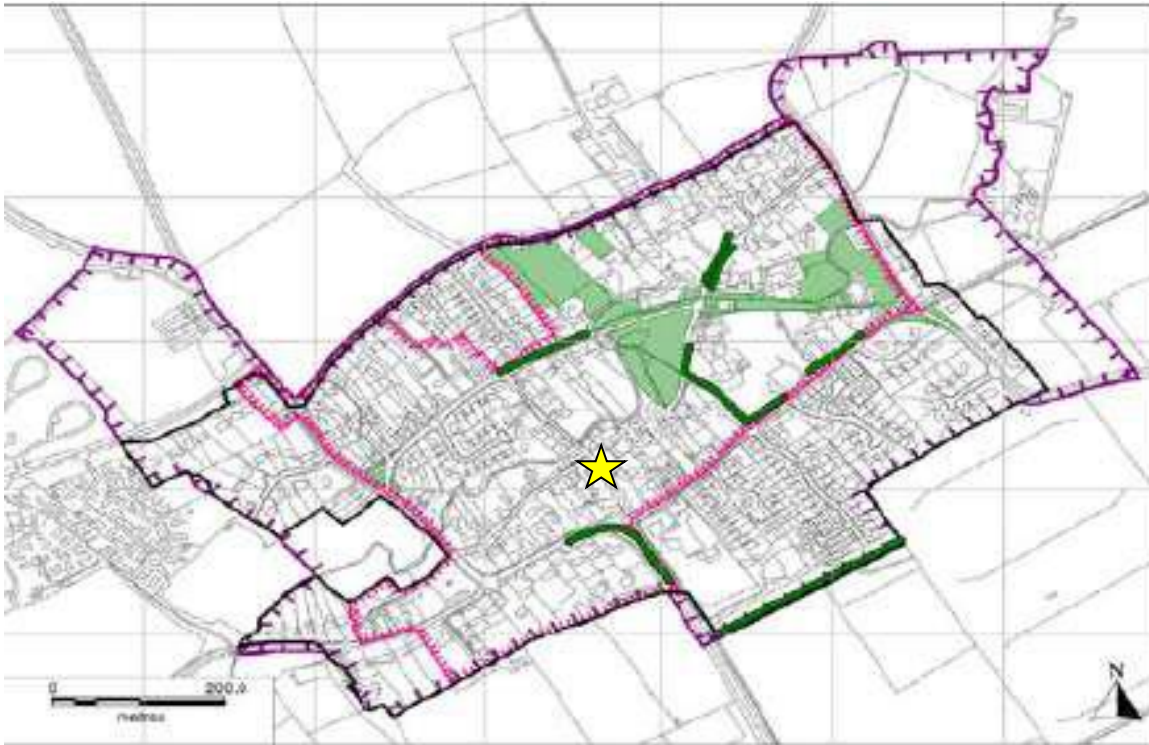


Figure 1 – conservation area map extract.

PLANNING HISTORY

1975/0372/HIST Replacement of existing advertisement sign with an externally illuminated circular hanging sign. **Approved.**

F/1995/0413 Construction of escape staircase. **Approved.**

F/1997/0867 Conversion and extension to create additional accommodation at first floor to form a 4 bedroomed hotel.

FUL/2006/0874 Construction of new entrance vestibule.

ADV/2007/0356 Installation of new signs and illumination to public house.

USE

The existing use of the site is a Public House. The premises has been vacant since early May 2023.

LAYOUT

Essentially the former public house and ancillary accommodation is proposed to be converted with some internal alterations and minor elevational changes. The dwellings will share the same parking court with allocated parking. Private amenity spaces and bin storage areas are also indicated on the drawing 23-12-02 together with additional landscaped areas.

AMOUNT

A total of 6No apartments consisting of 3No two bedroom and 3No one-bedroom dwellings. All would comply with the national space standards for this type of dwellings and rooms sizes. Each dwelling will be provided with a dedicated off-road parking space in accordance with Highways guidance. There are a total of 9 parking spaces proposed. The gross internal floor areas are indicated on the submitted drawing 23-012-02. Four of the apartments will be ground floor with level access. With modest garden areas these could be suitable for more elderly occupants and would accord with policies contained within the NP.

HIGHWAY MATTERS

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Policy SC18(h) of the CS seeks to secure car parking provision that accords with the local parking standards.

Parking for residential developments is based on the number of habitable rooms proposed. If it was shared parking the requirement would be 8 spaces, with allocated parking spaces the requirement for this development is 9 spaces. This is indicated on the proposed site plan and schedule. There is no specific allocation for visitor spaces although in part the allocated spaces can take part account of this. However, the impact on the highway network is believed to be less than would be a successful public house operation.

The current access to the public house car park has two access points with no control. The northern most access exits very close to the gable end of the current public house and is considered a blind spot to oncoming traffic. The proposed site plan addresses this by proposing a reduced access width. It would be possible with consultation with the LHA to create an entrance and exit with control signage. This could be conditioned.

The development is considered to be adequately served by this, and the impact on the highway's capacity and safety will be acceptable. There will also be enough visibility in both directions. In term, this would mean a potential reduction in traffic or indiscriminate parking if the Noel Arms was to operate as a public house.

DESIGN

The proposal is to work with the existing building and to sympathetically convert and modify to create a mews type residential development with shared parking and modest private amenity areas. Minimal alterations are proposed to the existing buildings but include additional entrance doors and some modified openings. There are elements of demolition required. The demolition relates to a former extension and not part of the historic structure. Other demolition includes superius timber structures about the entrance and a prefabricated concrete store building.

The intention is to provide a pleasing residential development with a known need. The eclectic mix of varying structures, ridge heights, materials, window, and door types will maintain and add to the conservation area setting.

The suggestions essentially involve making internal changes to the ground and first floors so they may be used continuously and kept up to a higher, more consistent standard. Changing the building's use to residential ensures that it is continually occupied and well-maintained.'

In order to honour the Noel Arms and its heritage from the 1800's, the applicants have suggested installing a piece of street furniture or hanging sign to honour the heritage significance of the public house to the community. This could be agreed by condition.

ENVIRONMENTAL

There are no known environmental issues associated with this site. Conversion to residential requires building regulation approval and the dwellings to meet current levels of thermal performance. This will require additional insulation, double glazed windows, and efficient heating. This will improve the buildings energy performance and lessen impact on the environment.

LANDSCAPING

Currently the overriding view of the premises when viewed from the street is mainly a large expanse of tarmac. The intention is to soften this with a new boundary wall and soft landscaping. The final details could be agreed by condition but similar walling to photo in Figure 2



Figure 2 – type of boundary walling proposed.

ECOLOGY

The building until very recently the building has been occupied with no known occurrence of protected species being recorded. In terms of biodiversity the current site offers little to attract wildlife. The site is primarily buildings with asphalt covered parking and hard standing areas. The intention as indicated on the submission drawings is to include areas of landscaping and lawned areas to give positive biodiversity over the current site.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The site falls within the Langham conservation area and is also to an Article 4 direction. There is no specific features identified in any heritage appraisal that are affected by this proposal. See also Heritage statement.

SCALE

The scale of the conversion retains the same footprint.

ADAPTABILITY, RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The proposed conversion will be designed to accord with current building regulations Part L1A or better. The properties will be issued with Energy Performance Certificates on completion and before occupation.

The development as proposed would be constructed using traditional but modern methods incorporating local material suppliers and labour. The flats would be designed to limit the use of water to be no more than 105 litres/person/day. Proposed sources of energy efficient measures could include solar panels for hot water supply, heat recovery systems, energy efficient lighting and 'A' rated appliances. Heating will be by high efficiency gas fired boilers or air source heat pumps. The use of automatic timers, sensors, detectors, and thermostats would also be fitted to minimise carbon emissions.

DESIGNING OUT CRIME

Each dwelling would be good natural surveillance. Low energy security lighting would be agreed by condition to the parking and shared access routes. Any new window or door would meet the criteria for secured by design.

PLANNING POLICIES

The overriding planning policies relating to this application are contained within the NPPF paragraph 93. Also, the Local Plan 2011.

The Local Plan policy CS7 states that loss of a public house will not be supported unless this facility that meets local needs can be provided is available and that all options for continued use have been explored. We believe this policy has been met. See compliance with Policy CS7 later in this report.

Applicable policies within the Neighbourhood Plan dated October 2022 have been taken into account. The design will comply with all the specific objectives set out contained within the Building Design. The development could be considered high density; however, this is typical of a conversion of an existing building. Retention of the existing building would retain the existing character of the village.

Policy SG2: Meeting housing needs as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals consisting of three or more dwellings should provide a range of house types, sizes and tenures to meet the general and specialist needs for housing in Langham, including the following demographic groups: a. the elderly, who may need smaller homes and bungalows where adaptability, accessibility and energy efficiency are paramount; b. families who require larger homes to meet changing household needs; c. those who need high quality but affordable homes to enable them to live/work locally; d. those who need support to acquire a home and may choose to have rental accommodation; e. those whose physical ability requires a high level of accessibility throughout the home.

It is believed this proposed development meets the criteria set within the Langham Neighbourhood Plan 2022 including Policy VC3. The development would contribute the Langham Housing allocation and provide accessible ground floor dwellings as per Policy SG1.

COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY CS7

Although currently vacant, the lawful use of the proposal site remains a public house (Sui Generis). Public houses are considered to fall within the meaning of 'key services' afforded by Policy CS7 and thus the Policy is engaged. This is equally evident with respect to Paragraph 93 of the framework.

For the proposal to comply with Policy CS7 of the Local Plan core strategy, as noted, the criteria listed (a – c) below should be met.

- a. adequate alternative provision is available within or adjacent to the settlement or will be available.
- b. all reasonable efforts have been made to preserve the facility or service, but the service is no longer considered viable.
- c. Development should take account of the needs and requirements of all people in the community, including people with disabilities or special needs, elderly people, and young people. Appropriate measures or adaptations should be included where necessary.

Alternative Provision:

In answer to the above alternative provision the Wheatsheaf PH is within 50 metres of the premises and offers a very similar service. In considering the proposals compliance with Policy CS7. Also, existing provision of comparable services within a 3 mile radius of relevance. In this regard, the following services are identified:

- The Wheatsheaf, 2 Burley Road, LE15 HY
- Old Buttercross, Panniers Way LE15 7US
- The Grainstore Brewery & Tap, Station Approach, LE15 6RE
- The Railway, Station Road, LE15 6QU
- The Royal Duke Bar & Grill, West Road, LE15 6LU
- Wheatsheaf, Northgate, LE15 6QS
- Bill's Bar, Melton Road, LE15 6AX
- The Captain Noel Newton, High Street, LE15 6AJ
- The Admiral Hornblower, High Street, LE15 6AS
- Crown Tavern, Crown Walk, LE15 6BZ
- Supperbox at the Whipper Inn, Market Place, LE15 6DT
- The Lord Nelson, Market Place, LE15 6DT
- Hitchen's Barn, Burley Rd, LE15 6DH
- Lucky Hoof at The Angler, Mill St, LE15 6EA
- Hunters Bar & Kitchen, Catmos St, LE15 6HW
- The Fox & Hounds, Somerby Rd, LE15 8LY
- The Blue Ball at Braunston, Cedar St, LE15 8QS

As identified above, there are currently 17 drinking establishments operating within a 3 mile radius of The Noel Arms.

Viability:

The pub had previously struggled and changed landlord in 2020 where the previous landlady reopened the pub after minor internal cosmetic works, additionally offering bar food in July 2020. However, this did not prove successful in aiding the pub to remain a viable business, despite a press release of the new landlady and reopening. Unfortunately, the landlady filed for bankruptcy on 25th April 2023. From the period of 1 April 2020 to 1 May 2023 the landlady had accrued a total of £42,492 in rental arrears due to the struggling financial viability of the pub. Utility companies are also in arrears. To aid continued use the owners did not chase rent appears or seek remuneration through the courts.

The pub was sold by the previous owners in 2019, the then landlord left in 2020 due to the operation being unviable with a rental arrears of £5,152 and the Noel Arms changed landlady reopening July 2020 after some minor internal cosmetic works. The issue of viability is considered to be further evidenced by the prior history of the site, whereby the current owners continued to trade since purchase and has now also closed to lack of trade. Those factors contributing to the issue of viability include, as identified, the number of alternative competing providers within Langham and Oakham along with the pubs position within the village, located in a residential area 2miles outside the Town centre of Oakham and away from main pedestrian ‘thoroughfares’ whereby potential footfall is extremely low.

Furthermore, the closest pub to the Noel Arms, 50 yards away is The Wheatsheaf, this public house is closed on a Monday and Tuesday, only serving food on a Thursday to Sunday. The Wheatsheaf pub is receiving positive reviews, however, does not see it financially viable for it to be open 7 days a week, having two pubs in close proximity has impacted on The Noel Arms. The Wheatsheaf does not operate its kitchen on a daily basis, evidence of a relatively low requirement for dining on a daily basis. For these reasons, the future operation of The Noel Arms pub is considered to be unviable. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with criteria b. of the policy.

The current status of the facility is that it lays vacant in need of repair. It has been left in a poor state of repair causing the building to deteriorate inside, as we are understanding that a public house is not viable due to a previous debts left by the former landlords. It would be a more sustainable solution to reuse the site and retain the facility under the new residential proposal.

The proposal would be compliant with the Core Strategy due to the availability of comparable services, the needs of the community will still be met within Langham, consistent with the NPPF.

Community Need:

The site currently makes a negative contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal allows for very positive change to the existing street scene providing a much-needed new lease of life for this building. The proposal will provide positive channelled views that are in line with the existing character and appearance of this part of Langham. It would also help to meet requirements of all people in the community, including people with disabilities or special needs, elderly people, and young people by providing both affordable and ground floor level access accommodation. Appropriate measures for suitable adaptations are included in the proposals.

The proposal respects the significance of relevant heritage assets and does not result in harm to this significance; in fact, it will lead to an enhancement of the setting which will enforce the significance of the assets.

As the Noel Arms was family run, there was limited employment opportunities in the village from the pub. The economic benefits of the proposal are considered to be twofold. In the short term, the construction phase associated with the development will stimulate the local economy through the employment of construction workers/professionals. Secondly, future occupiers of the development will utilise local services and facilities, including those within Langham, supporting the local economy.

FLOOD RISK

The development site is situated to the edge of the floodplain. However, as no additional construction is proposed the floodplain will be unaffected. It is within an area well serviced by public storm drains and foul sewers that could accommodate run-off and wastewater. The development is within an existing residential area served by local amenities.

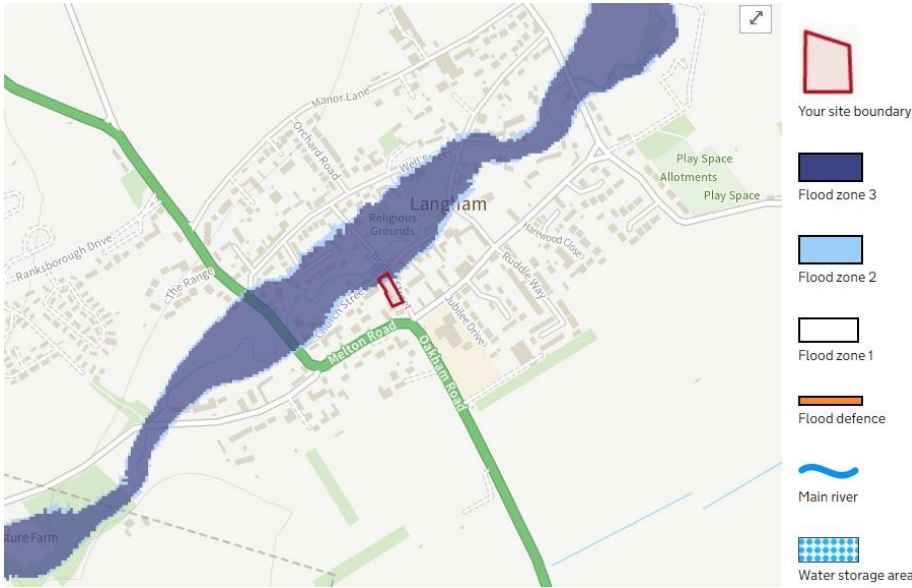


Figure 3 Flood map – Seas and rivers – site in red.

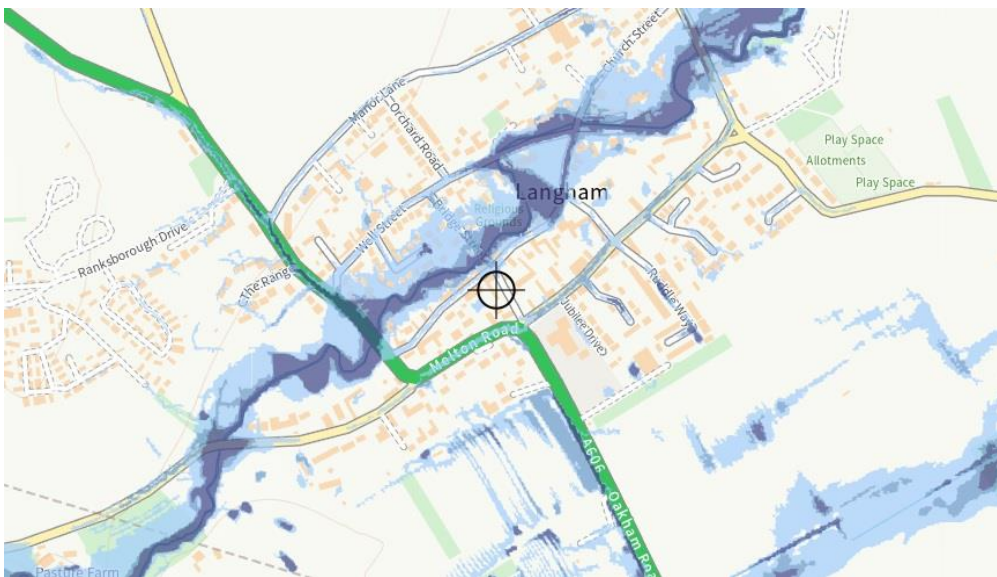


Figure 4 Flood Map – Surface water – site is target.

WASTE

Waste created by this development will be located to dedicated hard standing areas and moved by the residents to a suitable location on collection day. This area will also incorporate an area for recycling materials. This waste will be collected on a regular basis by the local authority collection service. See drawing 23-012-02.

ACCESS

There are local bus stops within 100 metres to the south of the site. The site is situated close to Melton Road A606 for routes north to Melton Mowbray (8 miles) for links to the A607 for routes east/ west and south to Oakham (1.8 miles) for onward links to the A1 North at Stretton (11 miles) or South at Stamford (11.6 miles). The nearest railway station is Oakham (1.8 miles) for national and international links.

INCLUSIVE ACCESS

Level access to the residential conversions may not be fully compliant with the building regulations due to the physical constraints. Ground floor apartments will include level approaches to the principal entrances, wide ground floor doorways to accommodate wheelchair users. First floor flats will be accessible to ambulant disabled persons.



Figure 5 Aerial Photo – site in yellow.

IN SUMMARY

The loss of the pub meets all criteria of Policy CS7. This is considered a sustainable form of development in an existing residential area providing homes with a recognised need. This is an appropriate use of this now redundant building and underutilised land.