

## Report of the Head of Planning & Enforcement Services

**Address** THE SWAN PH BREAKSPEAR ROAD NORTH HAREFIELD

**Development:** Demolition of existing two-storey detached building (Application for Conservation Area Consent).

**LBH Ref Nos:** 18239/APP/2011/1586

**Drawing Nos:** Demolition Justification Report, dated 3rd August 2011  
1:1250 Location Plan  
11/3252/5  
Conservation Area Statement, dated 22/06/2011  
Photograph x 17

**Date Plans Received:** 28/06/2011                      **Date(s) of Amendment(s):**

**Date Application Valid:** 08/07/2011

### 1. CONSIDERATIONS

#### 1.1 Site and Locality

The application site is located on the eastern edge of the Harefield Village centre, directly opposite the village green and pond. It is sited on the south western side of Breakspear Road North, some 70m to the east of its junction with High Street and is roughly rectangular in shape, tapering towards the rear with a 24m frontage and an overall depth of 42m. The site comprises a detached two-storey building, which was formerly in use as a public house known as The Swan, but is now vacant and the site boarded up. The main elevation of the building is set back from the front boundary of the site by approximately 3.3m to 4.0m and this area was used for car parking which appears to have involved overhanging of the public footway.

The building was built by Charles Brown, a local builder and opened as a public house in 1908. The building is of rough cast render and a plain tiled roof with two asymmetric mock timber frame gables fronting the street with a decorative swan tile incorporated into the larger left hand side gable. There is a projecting hipped wing with a cat slide roof at the rear. Above the windows, there are attractive tile creased arches. The building originally had an attractive glazed brick string course detail, which has now been vandalised. There is a more modern porch to the front and side and rear single storey extensions.

Immediately adjoining the whole eastern side boundary of the site is a part single storey, part two storey building which is in use a retail pharmacy at the front with residential above, and as a repair garage further to the rear of the site. The garage use also wraps around to the rear of the application site. To the west are detached residential houses. The south eastern side, the boundary of the site is formed by an older buttressed wall

which appears to pre-date the public house, although it is not listed. Adjoining this wall, within the front garden area of the neighbouring house is a large protected Ash tree which has been crudely lopped on one side.

The application site is located within an Archaeological Priority Area and forms part of the Harefield Village Conservation Area. It is also located within the Harefield Local Centre and covered by a Tree Protection Order (TPO\_3). It also forms part of the Colne Valley Regional Park.

## **1.2 Proposed Scheme**

This is an application for conservation area consent to demolish the two storey detached building on site known as the Swan Public House.

The application is supported by 2 reports, namely:

Conservation Area Statement, dated 06/22/2011:

This provides the background to the application and describes the site. It goes on to advise that there has been a change in drinking habits over the last ten years with increased alcohol selling by supermarkets for home consumption leading to reduced demand for pubs. Whilst some have adapted, particularly involving food, there is a limit to how many establishments can go down this route, hence there is a large over supply of pubs. The report goes on to advise that it is understood that the pub closed in September 2010 and was then marketed, but little or no interest was shown. There is therefore no demonstrable local demand for the pub to remain. It then goes on to consider the Harefield Village Conservation area and states that unfortunately, there is no written appraisal but it is understood the designation focuses on the traditional village layout of Harefield and evolved over many years with a wide mixture of building styles, ages and sizes with no overriding architectural style. The former pub building appears to date from the turn of the 19th Century and has suffered from a series of unsympathetic extensions and alterations. The report concludes that the building is an architectural mess and has a negative impact on the Conservation Area. Given this negative impact and the quality of the proposed replacement building, demolition is justified as it will have a positive impact on the Conservation Area and will both preserve and enhance it.

Demolition Justification Report, dated 03/08/11:

This provides the background to the report and includes the qualifications and experience of the author. A historical context and site description is provided. The report states that the building was inspected on 27/07/11. The building dates to the first quarter of the last century and is described as having a general Arts and craft character although it is not a sophisticated design. It has been disfigured with awkward extensions, which are described and the interior of the building is noted as being in disarray, being damaged and vandalised. The conservation area context of the building is then described, and its contribution to that character. National and local policy is then considered.

## **1.3 Relevant Planning History Comment on Planning History**

The only relevant planning history on this site is the associated planning application, 18239/APP/2011/1588, which is also included on this agenda.

## **2. Advertisement and Site Notice**

- 2.1** Advertisement Expiry Date:- 17th August 2011
- 2.2** Site Notice Expiry Date:- Not applicable

## **3. Comments on Public Consultations**

The extent of consultation carried out on this scheme and the responses received are detailed on the planning application ref. 3877/APP/2010/2200, which is being reported to this committee. The comments raised by the petitioners and the individual responses mainly involve planning issues and are not particularly relevant to this application for conservation area consent.

URBAN DESIGN/CONSERVATION OFFICER:

**Background:** This is an attractive building, opened as a Public House in 1908, built by a local builder, Charles Brown, in rough cast render and tiled roof. The building has two asymmetric mock timber frame gables fronting the street elevation with a swan tile on the larger gable, and attractive tile creased arches over the windows. The building originally had an attractive glazed brick string course detail, which has been vandalised recently. There is a modern front porch and several small modern extensions to the side and rear of the building, and there is scope to consolidate these into a large extension.

**Interior:** There are many original features retained such as the stained glass windows on the ground floor front elevation, the newel to the staircase and the windows, original panelled doors on first floor. The fire place in one of the bedrooms has since been removed or vandalised.

**Setting and contribution to Conservation Area:** The building sits within the historical commercial centre of Harefield Village Conservation Area, opposite the village green. Almost all buildings around the Green are domestic in scale, and are essential to its character. The picturesque setting of the green and the buildings around it make a very positive contribution to the character of the conservation area and its street scene. Due to its prominent location, there are long views to and from the site across the Green and from Rickmansworth Road. The staggered line of buildings allows views of the Swan along Breakspear Road and Northwood Road. Gap views of the building and the rear of the garden are also available from Breakspear Road and Pond Close. The site is, therefore, very sensitive and if demolition is agreed, new development should be high quality in design and contribute to the character of the area.

**Comments:**

**Demolition:** Policy HE 7.6 of PPS5 states that 'Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset in the hope of obtaining consent, the resultant deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be a factor taken into account in any decision'.

On site visit, the building appeared to be in a deliberate state of neglect. Whilst boarded up, the onsite security was poor, and the building appeared to have been vandalised recently. There did not appear to be any evidence of structural issues or dampness. In this regard, we would disagree with the report submitted justifying demolition and believe that the building could be adopted for other viable uses.

In accordance with the above policy and from a conservation point of view, demolition is

not justified.

**Redevelopment:** There are no objections to the conversion of the building for residential use. However, the proposed scheme would result in a large and bulky building, inappropriate to the scale of residential buildings surrounding the Green.

**Position and setting:** The proposed building would be very wide and whilst set back from its current building line, it would extend to the rear, much deeper than the neighbouring residential buildings. Given the increased depth of the footprint, the new building would have a considerable visual impact when viewed from the rear of adjacent properties and from Pond Close.

In terms of its setting, the scheme proposes at least 8 car parking spaces to the front, with very limited scope of landscaping. Whilst there is front parking on the site currently, this is not ideal and smaller in scale. The enlarged car parking area would be considered visually intrusive to the street scene and would be detrimental to the appearance of the area.

**Townscape:** To the front, the proposed building would cover almost the entire width of the plot, leaving a small gap for access to the rear. This would not allow gap views to the rear of the garden which is an important part of the street scene of the area. The width, together with the enlarged roof would also appear visually intrusive when viewed across from the Green and from Rickmansworth Road, detracting from its picturesque setting and character of the conservation area. It would be, therefore, unacceptable from a townscape point of view.

**Scale:** The footprint of the proposed building is much larger compared to the existing and adjacent buildings, thus appearing cramped with very limited amenity space. In this respect, the scheme would not relate to the established scale and layout of the street and would be unacceptable.

**Design:** In design terms, the building is standard and does not reflect the vernacular and rural townscape of the village centre, and as such fails to address its local context. To the rear, the design fails to relate to the mews buildings to east or the 70s residential building to the west. The steep and large roof form appears bulky and would result in two crown roofs and a small flat section to the front, alien to the simple and traditional roof form design of the existing properties.

Overall, the design of the new building does not reflect the local context of the area and fails to relate to the simple design of the adjacent buildings. It would not enhance the character and appearance of the area and would in fact, detract from it. It is, therefore, unacceptable from a design point of view.

**Conclusion:** The existing building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and the setting of the Green, and has architectural merits of its own. There are no structural issues evident and, therefore, the demolition of the existing building is not justified. It is felt that there is scope to adopt the existing building and extend to the rear for conversion to residential use. Demolition is, therefore, unacceptable.

The proposed building does not relate to the local context and as such would not be considered an improvement to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is poorly designed with a very large and bulky roof form, alien to the established design of buildings in the vicinity. The new building, therefore, does not justify the loss of the

existing historic asset on site and is unacceptable.

#### **4. UDP / LDF Designation and London Plan**

The following UDP Policies are considered relevant to the application:-

Part 1 Policies:

Part 2 Policies:

PPS5	Planning for the Historic Environment
BE4	New development within or on the fringes of conservation areas
BE19	New development must improve or complement the character of the area.

#### **5. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES**

The main issue to be considered in the determination of this application is the acceptability of demolition of the building and its impact upon the character and appearance of the Harefield Village Conservation Area.

As considered within Section 7.01 of the associated planning application ref. 18239/APP/2011/1588, the building, although not statutorily listed or included within the local list, is considered to contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Harefield Village Conservation Area. It is considered to be a heritage asset for the purposes of PPS5. Policy HE8.1 of PPS5 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset or its setting is a material consideration in determining the application. Furthermore, PPS5 goes on to advise that not all elements of a Conservation Area contribute towards its significance but where they do, policies HE9.1 to HE9.4 and HE10 will apply which establish the presumption in favour of conservation.

The building has been inspected by the Council's Conservation Officers and it appears to be structurally sound, although it has suffered from vandalism. PPS5 makes clear at policy HE7.6 that where this is the case it should not count in favour of the scheme.

In this instance, it is considered that very little in the way of justification for the demolition of the building has been provided, with no building survey having been undertaken to assess the condition and possible limitations to the buildings re-use and conservation. No discussions have been held with officers as to how the existing buildings could be re-used/adapted. As such, the principal of demolition has not been justified in accordance with PPS5 in terms of this building which is of significance to the Harefield Village Conservation Area.

Furthermore, as planning application ref. 18239/APP/2011/1588 is also recommended for refusal, demolition is unnecessary and could potentially leave an unsightly site within the Conservation Area.

The application for demolition is therefore recommended for refusal, contrary to policies BE4 of the adopted Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan, Saved Policies (September 2007) and PPS5.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

### REFUSAL for the following reasons:

#### 1 NON2 Non Standard reason for refusal

The Swan Public House building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Harefield Village Conservation Area. In the absence of a full structural survey or similar and/or a financial viability appraisal, the proposal fails to demonstrate that all options for the renovation and repair of the building have been explored. Until such time that all options have been explored, it is considered that its demolition is premature. Furthermore, planning application ref: 18239/APP/2011/1588 to replace the building with a two storey block has been refused. As such, there are no acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment. In the absence of this information the proposed demolition is considered to be premature and detrimental to the character and appearance of the Harefield Village Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies BE4 and BE19 of the adopted Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan, Saved Policies (September 2007) and PPS5.

### INFORMATIVES

- 1 The decision to REFUSE conservation area consent has been taken having regard to all relevant planning legislation, regulations, guidance, circulars and Council policies, including The Human Rights Act (1998) (HRA 1998) which makes it unlawful for the Council to act incompatibly with Convention rights, specifically Article 6 (right to a fair hearing); Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life); Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination).
- 2 The decision to REFUSE conservation area consent has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in the Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan Saved Policies (September 2007) set out below, including Supplementary Planning Guidance, and to all relevant material considerations, including the London Plan (July 2011) and national guidance.

PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment

BE4 New development within or on the fringes of conservation areas

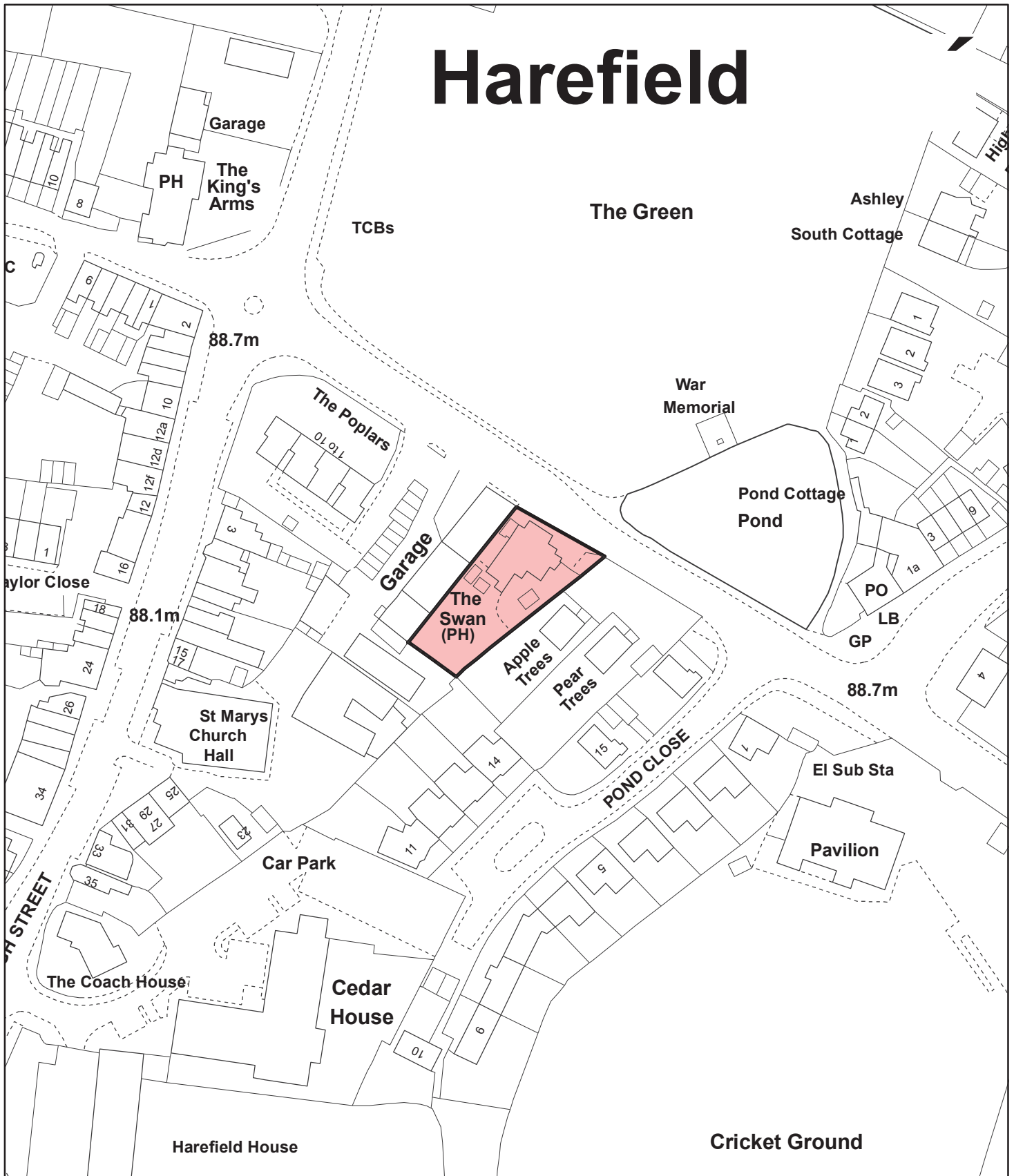
BE19 New development must improve or complement the character of the area.

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# Harefield



**Notes**

 Site boundary

For identification purposes only.

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Site Address

**The Swan PH.  
Breakspear Road North,  
Harefield**

Planning Application Ref:

**18239/APP/2011/1586**

Planning Committee

**North**

Scale

**1:1,250**

Date

**September  
2011**

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