

## **Unanimous decisions agreed on two Ottery planning applications**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> April East Devon District Council Planning Committee considered Planning applications 20/1647/MFUL & 20/1648/LBC in respect of Salston Manor and 20/1316/FUL relating to the former Colbert Hall Mill Street

The planning committee unanimously agreed to support plans that would see 13 new homes built within the grounds of Salston Manor. Councillors heard that the site is outside the built-up area boundary of Ottery St Mary and was contrary to Local Plan policies, particularly as no affordable housing was to be provided, but that the wider benefits from the restoration of the listed building outweigh the negatives of the scheme. However the application is proposed as enabling development to allow the continued refurbishment of the listed Manor House that already benefits from consent.

Development manager Chris Rose said: “This will secure the future of the heritage asset so we have to decide whether bringing the listed building back into use outweighs the harm of the buildings in the countryside.

“Officers are of the opinion that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the character and setting of Salston Manor – a key test within the National Planning Policy Framework. In the absence of any significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, the residential amenities of the occupiers of surrounding properties, ecology, or flood risk, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable, bringing a major benefit through the restoration of the listed building.”

Chris Riley, the applicant, said that, the plans were sympathetic and balanced and were needed to fund the restoration works.

Cllr Geoff Pratt, who represents the Ottery St Mary Ward, said: “The problem is that the building has suffered so much damage in the last 14 years since lying empty that the cost must be extraordinary to deal with the restoration and development, so I understand why they are making this application today. It is an important listed building for Ottery St Mary, and it needs to be dealt with, the heritage benefits will outweigh any harm to the settings. I want to see this listed building restored, developed, and lived in, and this is the main priority here.” The Planning committee unanimously approved the application.

**The site of the former Colbert Hall**, is located to the rear of number 26 Mill Street and alongside Tar Lane. The application sought permission to convert the hall into 3 dwellings and remove the linking structure that connects the building to 26 Mill Street. Colbert Hall formed the rear part of Costcutters with the main retail unit located in 26 Mill Street and in a single storey building linking no 26 to the Hall. In November 2017 Costcutters closed due to a loss of trade from nearby Sainsbury's supermarket.

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan emphasises on the preservation of employment land within Ottery St. Mary, this is also reflected within Strategy 32 of the local Plan that seeks to retain employment uses unless the proposed use would not undermine or harm employment opportunities in the area.

Marketing information submitted confirmed that since 2017 the property was marketed for 16 months when a Vet obtained planning permission for a change of Use into a Veterinary practice. However due to the financial cost to renovate the building the vets had to pull out. Further marketing failed to produce a buyer and eventually on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020 the property was sold at Auction. The property had become for years an eyesore in Mill Street which is located within the Town Shopping Centre.

This is the third Planning Application relating to the Costcutters site. The two previous applications related to 26 Mill Street reducing the retail area to a small lock up shop coupled with a conversion into a town house. This was refused by the Council and also by the Inspector on appeal due to the proposed reduction in retail floor space would harm the vitality and viability of the town centre shopping area contrary to the provisions of Policy NP18 of the Neighbourhood Plan

The removal of the single storey link building is welcomed. This will separate the hall from the rear of 26 Mill Street and will form a Courtyard providing access to one of the Units and also provide an area for Bin storage and a cycle rack. It will also provide more natural light into Tar Lane.

The principle of the residential conversion is acceptable. Resisting the development on the basis of harm caused by the loss of employment floorspace would be unreasonable in view of the latest fourth application relating to 26 Mill Street 20/0685/FUI. It is proposed that the whole of the ground floor to 26 Mill Street will be used for retail Use and I would consider this acceptable and compares favourably with the size of the majority of retail units in the town.

I would therefore submit that this application would not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre. The Planning committee unanimously approved the application.

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