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## **PLANNING STATEMENT**

**Change of use of The Vixen public house to provide 18 flats (9 x 1no.flats and 9 x 2no. flats) and 2 ground floor retail unit.**

**The Vixen, Millfields Way, Strasbourg Square, Haverhill, CB9 0HR**

**Prepared by Strutt and Parker LLP on behalf of Radford Homes Ltd**

**December 2016**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Strutt and Parker LLP on behalf of Radford Homes Ltd.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to support the planning application for the conversion of a former public house, The Vixen, to 18 apartments and two retail units with associated parking and landscaping. The residential units will comprise 9 x 2no. bedroom flats and 9 x 1no. bedroom flats.
- 1.3 The former Public House is situated on Strasbourg Square to the south of Chalkstone Housing Estate in Haverhill. The redundant uninspiring building is dilapidated and in a poor state of repair having sat empty for approximately 7 years. The vacant building sits alongside a car parking area and behind this is a parade of shops. The application site is on a prominent corner site which is in need of redevelopment, to make use of a vacant under used building which detracts from the overall appearance of the area.
- 1.4 St Edmundsbury Council has already invested in Strasbourg Square to improve the area for residents of the Chalkstone Estate to provide new trees, benches and other measures to curb anti-social behavior. The Vixen building which forms the basis of this application remains an eye sore in a locality which is generally being improved for the benefit of local people.
- 1.5 The proposal will be a key part of the regeneration and rejuvenation of Strasbourg Square and will ensure that the appearance of the building will be dramatically improved whilst contributing to providing housing for the local area. The availability of the site which has sat empty for nearly seven years has been widely publicised given its derelict state on a prominent site and previous planning proposals which have not been progressed.
- 1.6 A review of alternative public houses in the locality highlights that there is a choice of alternative destinations and that they are primarily located in the High St which is within walking distance of the application site. Haverhill Town Centre is a focus for regeneration with new leisure, restaurants and retail uses and as a town will see growth to the north east and north west with new community facilities. It is evident in these changing times responding to demands, the Vixen public house is no longer required by the market for this use and the proposals are a small part contributing to the overall vision for Haverhill promoting sustainable development through managed growth.
- 1.7 The proposals for a change of use to residential with two new ground floor retail units facing onto the existing square will considerably enhance the site and the mixed use housing led scheme is entirely appropriate to rejuvenate the site.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1 The application site is a former Public House situated on Strasbourg Square, a local centre to the south of Chalkstone Housing Estate in Haverhill.
- 2.2 The square is surrounded by a predominantly residential area, characterised by terraces of houses and maisonettes over existing shops in the area. It is in a highly accessible central location less than half a mile from Haverhill Town Centre with local bus services available.
- 2.3 The application site comprises of a brick built two storey former public house and the surrounding hard standing. There is a car park adjacent to the public house and to the south east there are a small number of shops and take-aways overlooking the square.
- 2.4 The application site is in a prominent corner location and there is clearly scope to improve the quality of the built environment in this location. The vacant building which will be revamped has been described as an 'eye sore' and has a negative impact on the locality with its run down appearance. The overall aesthetic appeal of the site can be improved whilst providing a viable re-use.
- 2.5 The application site area is restrained and as documented in the accompanying Design & Access Statement, the application includes the reconfiguration and extension of the adjacent car park to enable this to be improved and utilised as part of the application.
- 2.6 The prominent building is a well-known site given that it has been vacant for nearly 7 years and has sat empty becoming more of an eye sore. The site has changed hands several times and with this has come media coverage and in recent times alternative proposals for a funeral directors were not welcomed by residents. A review of alternative facilities close to the Vixen has been undertaken and it is evident that there are a number of Public Houses in close proximity. This is addressed in detail in section 5 and the evidence contained in Appendix A however in summary there is a wide choice of alternative destinations with 15 public houses within a 3 miles radius. Those pubs in Haverhill are concentrated in the High Street area and surrounding settlements also have their own Public Houses. It is evident that there is no longer a demand for a public house on the estate with no company taking on the building and wishing to invest in the business.
- 2.7 Over the seven years that the public house has been closed there has been a lack of interest for alternative uses with proposals not forthcoming to be considered by the Council. Given that the site is located in close proximity to existing homes in a residential area of the town, as well as a mixed-use development of maisonettes over retail units, it is considered that a mixed use housing led redevelopment would be the most appropriate use for the site in line with the Council's adopted policies. The site is brownfield land with potential for redevelopment to help meet housing needs and reduce the reliance needed on greenfield sites.

## **Planning History**

- 2.8 The site has changed ownership several times since it closed as The Vixen. Greene King sold the property in June 2002 to Punch Taverns. Punch Taverns then sold the pub in May 2007. It is evident that the site has had wide publicity in local press as evidenced in Appendix B. The Haverhill Echo reported in May 2010 that the Public House was on the market. In September 2014 there was further call for the site to be developed in the Cambridge News. The Public House is listed as closed on CAMRA's website which is an organisation likely to campaign to have the premises reopened if there was a chance of a viable business proposition there. The residents and local community are evidently well aware of the premises availability over the last 7 years.
- 2.9 In 2011 it was sold to Undertakers who submitted Planning Application SE/12/0707/FUL in June 2012 to seek to change the use to a Funeral Directors. There was local objection to this use on a busy estate and the application was withdrawn. The site was on the market again in late 2014/early 2015.
- 2.10 These are changing times for Haverhill with the town centre focus for regeneration and in close proximity to the application site. Whilst not directly affected there is a major development of 2500 houses proposed to the north of Haverhill. The development includes 2 Local Centres to include a large variety and provision of dedicated community facilities.

## **Pre-Application Enquiry**

- 2.11 A pre-application enquiry was submitted in November 2015 and following a meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014, a written response was received on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015. A copy of this response is contained in Appendix C.
- 2.12 This Statement seeks to address the policies highlighted on the loss of a community facility along with other considerations discussed at the pre-application stage concerning built form and parking.

## **3.0 DESCRIPTION AND DESIGN OF THE PROPOSALS**

### **Proposals**

- 3.1 This full planning application is for the change of use of the former Vixen Public House to residential, comprising 18 flats (9 x no. 1 bedroom flats and 9 x 2 no. bedroom flats) with two retail units on the ground floor.
- 3.2 The mixed use housing led scheme follows the town centre principle encouraging uses above shop premises to maximise the use of space and ensure the Centre has life and natural surveillance after shops have closed. The new retail unit/s will face onto the existing square.
- 3.3 The proposals are outlined on the plans that accompany the application and detailed in the Design & Access Statement.
- 3.4 The concept for extending and redressing the existing building is to be simple and sympathetic of the rectilinear forms of the existing building. A limited palette of materials are proposed that will allow the existing building fabric to be overclad to meet current requirements for thermal performance and airtightness.
- 3.5 It is proposed to demolish the garage and store to create space for on plot car parking.
- 3.6 The redevelopment of the site which has been empty for 7 years will allow for best use to be made of this brownfield site which is considered particularly important in view of the prominent location and the need for housing.

### **Design**

- 3.7 The proposals have been designed to respond to the constraints of the site in order to provide a sustainable development improving the appearance of the site and having a positive impact on the immediate surrounding area.
- 3.8 The new dwellings proposed will complement the buildings around the square and the dwellings across Millfields Way by providing a simple and contemporary design whilst using robust materials.
- 3.9 Red clay bricks will be used to reference the existing red clay blocks used to construct the shops and Community Centre located opposite the site. Grey bricks are proposed to face onto the square, as they are robust in their nature. Colour through renders will be used for many of the elevations, as they require very little maintenance whilst adding to the contemporary design. Metal cladding is proposed to be used for the second, which is set back, to clearly differentiate from the rest of the building.

### **Access, Highways and Parking**

- 3.10 The development will be accessed from Ingham Road where there is an existing car park, previously utilised by the pub employees and visitors. The proposal and associated reconfiguration and extension of the car park will enable 28 spaces to be provided; 1 space per apartment with 2 allocated visitor spaces and 8 additional spaces for open use by residents, visitors and customers of the community centre, as part of the existing public car park.
- 3.11 The flexible parking spaces will prevent unused spaces which may arise if all of the spaces were allocated for the residential dwellings and associated visitors.
- 3.12 Revised parking proposals are outlined in the accompanying Design & Access Statement.
- 3.13 Although consultation with local residents, business owners and other stakeholders has recognised general support for the scheme, discussions held did emphasise a specific local desire for the site to provide sufficient resident and visitor parking. This has been reflected through the parking provision that the proposals include.

## 4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Local Policy

4.1 The Vixen Public House is located within St Edmundsbury Council area. The adopted local level planning documents are:

1. Core Strategy: this was adopted on 14 December 2010,
2. Joint Development Management Policies Document 27 February 2015
3. Haverhill Vision 2031 adopted on 23 September 2014
4. The Haverhill Masterplan 2015

4.2 Relevant policies include:

### Core Strategy

CS5 Affordable Housing

### Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015

DM2 Creating Places

DM7 Sustainable design and construction

DM12 Mitigation, enhancement management and monitoring of biodiversity

DM22 Residential Design

DM36 Local centres

DM41 Community facilities and services

DM45 Transport assessment and travel plans

DM46 Parking standards

### Haverhill Vision 2031

Policy HV8: New and existing local centres and community facilities

### The Haverhill Masterplan 2015

### Material Planning Policy Considerations

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

4.3 The NPPF is a relevant material planning consideration. The proposals will assist in meeting a number of the core planning principles as set out in the NPPF. This includes in particular the core planning principles to:



- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth.
- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;

#### Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 4.4 The Government's online Planning Practice Guidance is also a material consideration where relevant to the assessment of the application.

## 5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

### Principle of development

- 5.1 The application site is located in Haverhill, one of the two main towns in the Borough. It is a brownfield site with the building on site formerly run as a Public House named 'The Vixen'. The site lies within an existing local centre where policy HV8 of the Haverhill Vision and Policy DM36 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document apply. It is understood that the building is classed as a community facility as covered by Policy DM41. These policies seek to maintain certain uses and safeguard the area from other types of development.
- 5.2 However there is conflict as highlighted under the consideration of the Haverhill 2031 document that the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal describes Strasbourg Square 'proposed for mixed use residential led' development, where the indicator questions posed tested the suitability of the site to comprise residential development. Despite this, Policy HV8 seeks to maintain a mix of uses that excludes residential development and states that the sites listed will be safeguarded from other forms of development.
- 5.3 Notwithstanding the above, the site is in a sustainable central location in close proximity to a choice of alternative public houses and the building which is the subject of this application has been empty for 7 years, standing derelict and an eye sore. There is clearly no market demand for the well-publicised prominent site and this section will justify the reasons for the proposed change of use and how this appropriate use will contribute to the overall regeneration and rejuvenation of this part of the town.

### Former Public House Use (Policy DM41)

- 5.4 It is acknowledged that it can be important to retain community facilities where access to alternative facilities is limited and if a particular facility is essential to the livelihood of communities and to help reduce social exclusion. It is understood that there is an overall interest to protect and ensure the sustainable provision of community facilities and services. However, the former public house forming the basis of this application is not a thriving public community asset that is an essential meeting point with no other public houses nearby. The market reality and viability considerations need to be taken on board as part of the overall planning assessment.
- 5.5 Policy DM41 which considers Community Facilities and Services is quoted as a key policy and addressed below:

*The provision and enhancement of community facilities and services will be permitted where they contribute to the quality of community life and the maintenance of sustainable communities.*

*Proposals that will result in the loss of valued facilities or services which support a local community (or premises last used for such purposes) will only be permitted where:*

*a. it can be demonstrated that the current use is not economically viable nor likely to become viable. Where appropriate, supporting financial evidence should be provided including any efforts to advertise the premises for sale for a minimum of 12 months; and*

- 5.6 It is highlighted that the application site is not a valued facility supporting the local community. Instead the reality is that the site has lay redundant with the building being vacant for 7 years. The site is in a dilapidated state, likely to attract anti-social behaviour and is an eye sore. St Edmundsbury Council has already invested in Strasbourg Square to improve the area for residents of the Chalkstone Estate. This has seen the area improved with new trees, benches and measures to curb anti-social behaviour. The Vixen which forms the basis of this application remains an eye sore in a locality which is generally being improved for the benefit of local people.
- 5.7 The proposal will be a key part of the regeneration and rejuvenation of Strasbourg Square and will ensure that the appearance of the building will be dramatically improved and will contribute to providing housing for the local area. The details of the site which has sat empty for nearly seven years have been widely publicised given its derelict state on a prominent site and previous planning proposals which have not been progressed. The site is an eye sore and it is evident that the local community would appreciate the visual improvement of the site from past publicity and proposals.
- 5.8 The building has been vacant for approximately 7 years and has been on the market several times over this period. Both Greene King and Punch Taverns have been involved with the site previously but have evidently not been able to make a viable business operate in this location as they have not retained the site.
- 5.9 It is evident that the site has had wide publicity and as contained in Appendix B of local press. The Haverhill Echo reported in May 2010 that the Public House was on the market. In September 2014 there was further call for the site to be developed in the Cambridge News. The Public House is listed as closed on CAMRA's website which is an organisation likely to campaign to have the premises reopened if there was a chance of a viable business proposition there. The residents and local community are evidently well aware of the premises availability over the last 7 years.
- 5.10 The marketing period has been in excess of that expected by the Council, this site is not new to the market and given the lack of interest in taking over the site and restoring the building for use as a Public House market forces dictate that this is not economically viable and there is obviously no demand in this particular location.

- b. it can be demonstrated that there is no local demand for the use and that the building/site *is not needed for any alternative social, community or leisure use; or alternative facilities and services are available or replacement provision is made, of at least equivalent standard, in a location that is accessible to the community it serves with good access by public transport or by cycling or walking.*
- 5.11 We highlight that this site has been vacant for approximately 7 years and local people and groups are inevitably aware of the premises given its obvious abandoned state. Public consultation was undertaken as a result of previous proposals and the applicant is not aware of any local demand for the building for alternative uses. This has been confirmed through discussions with the Planning Officer and Economic Development Officer who have been unable to demonstrate a need for any community and/or retail space.
- 5.12 The site has had further publicity in March 2016 highlighting the availability of the site and potential proposals. The article is contained in Appendix B.
- 5.13 The proposal will not detract from the aim of the Local Authority to protect local centres to provide an adequate mix of facilities to meet day to day needs. There are no loss of shops and the redevelopment will provide two new retail units to support the vitality of the local centre. The proposals are appropriate in scale and character to reflect the role and function of Strasbourg Square and can only enhance the setting. The applicant is seeking support to improve the attractiveness of the local centre.
- 5.14 The application site is located adjacent to existing residential areas, the site is a 0.4 mile walk to the town centre and bus station, it is highly accessible to existing shops and services. The accessible location is enhanced by bus stops along Wratting Road and Millfields Way. There are alternative public houses of a far higher standard than the Vixen location that are accessible for the local community by public transport, cycling or walking.
- 5.15 A review of alternative Public Houses has been undertaken and it is immediately evident that the preferred location for public houses, together with restaurants is within the town centre locations where all of the nearby public houses are located. Indeed the regeneration of the town centre including restaurants and leisure facilities is a key focus for the Council. The following public houses are very close to the Vixen site but they all occupy town centre locations.

The Rose and Crown, Withersfield Road

The Wood Pack, Queens Road

The Royal Exchange, High Street

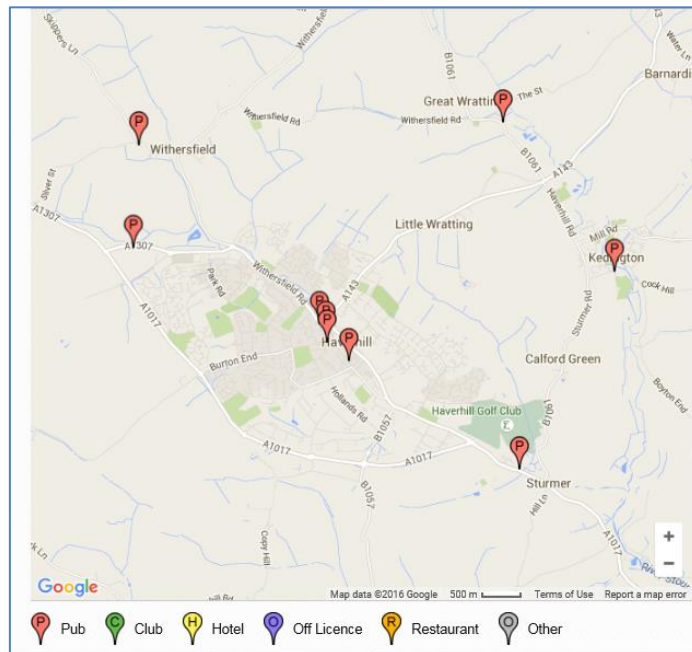
The Bull, Camps Road

The Queens Head, Queens Street

The Drabbet Smock, Peas Hill

- 5.16 An extract from the Haverhill Vision 2013 document, page 45, is contained in Appendix D and this shows the location of the site within the 10 minute walk to the centre radius. It also shows the connectivity with the existing cycling routes and proposed improvements and conveniently located bus routes via the town centre. The plan in Appendix E shows the central location of the Vixen pub site. It is clear that there are alternative premises for local people.
- 5.17 A search via 'www.whatpub.com' shows that there are 15 public houses within 3 miles of the Vixen site as shown in Appendix A. These alternative locations offer in some instances accommodation, bar and restaurant areas and others have attractive outside space. The town centre locations are highly accessible. It is possible that the Vixen location could not compete given that there has been no interest in acquiring the site as a public house and it remains vacant 7 years on. Market reality and viability considerations are inevitable factors. The proposal will not create a deficiency.

The map replicated below shows the distribution of local public houses with the focus on the town centre.



Source:

<https://whatpub.com/search?q=Vixen%2C+Haverhill&lat=52.084805&lng=0.444034&features=Open%2CPub%2CRealAle&r=10&t=d&p=1> 12.04.2016

- 5.18 In addition to the numerous public houses there are a wide variety of restaurants and takeaways within Haverhill that serve as an alternative facility to the Vixen.

*Where necessary to the acceptability of the development the local planning authority will require developers of residential schemes to enhance existing community buildings, provide new facilities or provide land and a financial contribution towards the cost of these developments proportional to the impact of the proposed development in that area, through the use of conditions and/or planning obligations.*

- 5.19 There is a choice of alternative Public Houses available in the locality of a higher standard, some offering accommodation as well as bar areas, restaurants and pub gardens. The Chalkstone estate already has a community hall situated along Millfields Way opposite The Vixen site. The Vixen is within a residential housing estate that is close to Haverhill town centre where the concentration of public houses/restaurants/shops is evident. The proposals are compliant with the aims of Policy DM41 and not in conflict.

#### **Haverhill Vision 2031**

- 5.20 In addition to Policy DM41, the Haverhill Vision 2031 also includes Policy HV8 related to New and existing local centres and community facilities. Haverhill Vision 2031 provides a framework for managing the continued growth in the town over the next two decades. Regeneration of the town will continue with the aim of creating a 21st Century town which has grown organically around its strong communities and has a more attractive retail, leisure and employment offer to its residents to decrease the amount of out commuting.
- 5.21 The proposal is in accordance with Haverhill Vision 2031 which acknowledges that Haverhill will grow and positively respond to changing demands. The demands for a Public House at the site of the Vixen are no longer evident and there is an opportunity now for the current owners to rejuvenate and considerably improve the outlook of the site to continue the work already undertaken.
- 5.22 In accordance with Haverhill Vision 2031 the proposal will provide housing and maximise the use of previously developed land used.
- 5.23 The Retail Impact Threshold Advice West Suffolk Final Report, June 2014 addresses Local Centres. There is no prescriptive nature of these local centres and the proposals are not in conflict with the aims of local centres. The new retail unit will be an added benefit and the new flats will increase the vibrancy of the locality and increase natural surveillance.

*Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway and launderette. In rural areas, large villages may perform the role of a local centre.*

### Local Centres Sites

6.13 Eight sites for Local Centres as shown in Table 6.4 are allocated.

Table 6.4– Proposed Allocations for Local Centres and Community Facilities

Site Reference Number	Proposed allocations	Use
HV8(a)	Hales Barn, Haverhill	Mix of uses which could include leisure and recreation; health and community facilities; small scale retail development and education.
HV8(b)	Former Chalkstone Middle School, Millfields Way	
HV8(c)	Strasbourg Square	
HV8(d)	Leiston Road	
HV8(e)	Blair Parade	
HV8(f)	Hanchet End	
HV8(g)	North East Haverhill strategic growth area	The locations and mix of uses in the new local centers will be identified through the masterplan process.
HV8(h)	North West Haverhill strategic growth area	

### Policy HV8: New and existing local centres and community facilities

- 5.24 Policy HV8 of the Haverhill 2031 document states that Strasbourg Square comprises an existing Local Centre. However, within the respective Sustainability Appraisal Report, it is stated that the site was ‘proposed for mixed use residential led’ development, where the indicator questions posed very much tested the suitability of the site to comprise residential development. For example, the questions ‘is it within 30 minutes of a GP, dentist and hospital by public transport?’, ‘is it within 30 minutes of a supermarket/shopping centre by public transport?’ and ‘will it reduce household waste?’ all relate to the potential use of the site for residential development. Despite this, Policy HV8 seeks to maintain a mix of uses that excludes residential development and states that the sites listed will be safeguarded from other forms of development. On this basis, it is considered that Policy HV8 has been set, contrary to the evidence base that it is founded upon. It is recognised that the Local Plan document has now been adopted and there is no avenue to challenge the legalities of this policy but it does appear the Sustainability appraisal is at odds with Policy HV8.
- 5.25 As already addressed, the Vixen Public House site is not a thriving premises that will be a loss to the community or that has recently closed and not been actively marketed. The market reality is that the premises is no longer required in this locality and an alternative use is required to rejuvenate the derelict site. It is not uncommon for Estate Public Houses to close, and in Haverhill The Standard, in Queensway on the Parkway estate was closed and redeveloped in around 2000. Furthermore it is documented in the Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan Issues & Options that consent was granted for the conversion of the former Bell Public House to provide a mixed-use commercial and residential development in the High Street. Commenting that the investment made in securing the leisure scheme, and support for appropriate new development demonstrates there is clear recognition of the need to improve the town centre, both in terms of its offer and function, and its environment.

- 5.26 The circumstances relating to this particular site are that the site is in need of rejuvenation. The combination of uses will enhance Strasbourg Square and continue the investment planned and the improvements already undertaken in the surrounding area. The site is in great need of improvement and the proposal will create a vibrant use and aesthetically improve the prominent site. The proposal will contribute to the quality of community life by providing modern housing in an accessible location whilst improving the overall appearance of the site and will maintain sustainable communities given the location and additional retail unit being added to Strasbourg Square.

### **Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015**

#### **Policy DM36 considers Local Centres**

- 5.27 *The local planning authority will seek to maintain a mix of uses in local centres which could include:*
- i. leisure and recreation;*
  - ii. health and community facilities;*
  - iii. small scale retail development, where it can be demonstrated to meet local need (generally not exceeding 150 sq. metres in net floor area unless a larger area is required to meet a demonstrated local shortfall); and*
  - iv. education.*

*In local centres the loss or change of use of shops or services (or premises last used for such purposes) will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the use is no longer viable or that the change of use will not have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the centre.*

- 5.28 The proposals will change the use of a former public house that has been vacant for approximately 7 years. The proposal includes a new retail unit which will add to the locality. The other shops and takeaways will remain at Strasbourg Square, a local centre that is being invested in and improved. It has been demonstrated that a public house is no longer viable in this location given the marketing of the site at various times over the last 7 years and despite local and wider publicity no business has come forward with a proposition to take the public house over. Greene King and Punch Taverns have previously owned the site but have not pursued a venture there. Market forces have dictated that a public house is no longer a viable option at this site. The change of use will have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the centre enhancing the businesses that are established there and adding a retail unit. The residential element will enhance the vibrancy of the centre which is located in an accessible site within the town with links to the town centre where most public houses, restaurants, shops and services are located.



- 5.29 The proposal will not detract from the aim of the Local Authority to protect local centres to provide an adequate mix of facilities to meet day to day needs. There are no loss of shops, on the contrary two new retail units will be provided to face on to Strasbourg Square. This provision is considered to be appropriate to meet local demand whilst ensuring that elements of the site do not continue to be unused by over-provision. The premises previously a public house have been unsuccessfully marketed on numerous occasions over the last 7 years. The proposals are appropriate in scale and character to reflect the role and function of Strasbourg Square and can only enhance the setting. The applicant is seeking support to improve the attractiveness of the local centre.

#### **Affordable Housing (Policy CS5)**

- 5.30 Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy considers affordable housing and where sites are 0.3 hectares and above or 10 dwellings or more are proposed, 30% shall be affordable. 5 of the dwellings will be provided as affordable units in respect of this requirement.

#### **Flood Risk and Drainage (Policy DM6)**

- 5.31 The former Vixen public house is shown to not be located in an area at risk of flooding as shown on the Environment Agency flood zone map. The site is located within flood zone 1 where residential development is considered to be an appropriate land use as set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance Flood Risk Vulnerability and Flood Zone Compatibility Table (Paragraph: 067 Reference ID: 7-067-20140306).

#### **Highways, Parking, and Access (Policy DM45 and DM46)**

- 5.32 Policy DM45 addresses transport assessments and travel plans whilst policy DM46 outlines parking standards.
- 5.33 The former use of the site would attract traffic movements and the adjacent car park would be utilised. The site benefits from a highly accessible location which will enable future residents to walk to local shops and services. Day to day requirements could be satisfied by Strasbourg Square and supermarkets including Tesco and Aldi, as well as Haverhill Leisure Centre in close proximity, within walking distance. The high street is easily accessible from the site again reducing the need to travel. The proposal for the application site is a form of sustainable development as a mixed use housing led scheme.
- 5.34 The applicant has developed a design for the site which ensures that the site provides car parking for the residential dwellings in accordance with the local adopted parking standards. The Design & Access Statement also includes proposals for reconfiguration of the existing car park to increase parking by 108% across the two parts of the site.

- 5.35 The redevelopment of the proposal site and demolition of the former public house garaging and beer garden area and extension of the existing car park into the grass verge will allow for the provision of 18 new car parking spaces on the site to be allocated for each apartment, and 2 allocated visitor spaces. Rearrangement and extension of the existing public car park as part of the redevelopment will also provide an additional 8 spaces for flexible use within this area. This provision takes account of local and Suffolk County Council parking standards, as well as the highly sustainable location of the site and local planning policy's intentions to reduce over-reliance on the car and promote more sustainable forms of transport.
- 5.36 In total, the scheme will provide 28 new spaces in addition to the existing 24 spaces and there will therefore be no loss of parking.

### **Layout, design and architecture**

#### **Policy DM2 considers Creating Places - Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness**

- 5.37 The proposals will restore and enhance the locality of Strasbourg Square, rejuvenating a dilapidated run down site that has been vacant for 7 years and has suffered as a result of this. In full accordance with this policy the proposal will considerably enhance a site where the character of the place has been eroded. The proposal will contribute to Strasbourg Square becoming a well-designed public realm which can contribute to the vitality of the area by creating a sense of place where people want to live and work.

#### **Policy DM7 considers Sustainable Design and Construction**

- 5.38 Policy DM7 concerns the sustainable design and construction of proposals. It also states that it is expected for proposals to include these details in a Design and Access Statement. The proposal looks to re-use previously developed site, a sustainable form of development which also re-uses existing materials. Robust and sustainable materials are also being used, in the form of grey bricks for example, which will be used to front the square. Broad principles regarding sustainable design and energy efficiency are also being adopted throughout the proposal.

#### **Policy DM22 considers residential design**

- 5.39 Policy DM22 concerns the impact of residential design on the current area sense of place and/or character of an area. The proposals are accompanied by a Design & Access Statement which details the design concept and justifies the approach taken to convert the existing building. Policy DM22 states that a design should be based on the analysis of existing buildings. Furthermore, the chosen materials of the proposal such as the red clay bricks replicate the existing buildings around Strasbourg Square. Policy DM22 also states that new dwellings should be "well built and physically

“durable”. The design will provide a much enhanced and sustainable street frontage by using robust grey bricks. Finally, DM22 concerns the characteristics and interest of design. The proposal will have a simple, contemporary feel, whilst using colour through renders, which will provide an aesthetically pleasing site.

### **Scale**

- 5.40 The existing building covers most of the application site which limits the availability of space for car parking/cycle waste storage. The site is currently accessed via the car park which is owned by St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Right of Way across the car park needs to be established. The submitted drawings provide visual elevations of each dwelling along with dimensioned cross sections.
- 5.41 The existing building has varied internal floor levels that respond to the sloping nature of the site and its relationship to Strasbourg Square. It is proposed to extend over the existing public house and toward Millfields Way to the north. Height references have been taken from the elevated dwellings to the north and the maisonettes over the shops onto Strasbourg Square.
- 5.42 Strasbourg Square has recently undergone significant redevelopment and landscaping to include a children’s play area. Adjacent to this is a large playing field with football goals and basketball courts for public use. The proposals offer the opportunity to further enhance this area.

### **Amenity**

- 5.43 The site is very constrained and hence there is little opportunity to provide external amenity space. However the site is adjacent to the re-landscaped square and children’s play area and within a 100 yards of a large playing field with basketball courts. Half a mile to the north east are further playing fields, a Sports Association, a football club and half a mile to the south east is Haverhill Sport Centre offering a large variety of internal and external amenity spaces. Balconies and terraces are proposed to the apartments where feasible.

### **Policy DM12 considers Mitigation, Enhancement, Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity**

- 5.44 The proposals are to re-use an existing building which has become redundant and no new building on greenfield land is required. The proposals include an enhancement to the areas, with new tree planting proposed as part of the proposals to reconfigure and landscape the car park.

## The Haverhill Masterplan 2015

- 5.45 Haverhill Vision 2031 provides a framework for managing the continued growth in the town over the next two decades. Development will be focused initially on the north-west Haverhill site and long term development located on the north eastern edge of Haverhill. The Core Strategy confirmed the allocation of 42 hectares of land at north-west Haverhill primarily for new homes. The allocation includes the construction of a north-west relief road for the town and also makes provision for a new primary school, recreational open space and local shops, community and health facilities.
- 5.46 The provision of new community centres with the mix of uses planned to meet current needs will ensure that the requirements of the community are met. Paragraph 5.36 acknowledges that *the town is made up of a number of neighbourhoods, some of which are much more distinctive than others. These neighbourhoods are often served by a local centre which may have a community centre, shop, takeaway facility and post office. They provide meeting points, enable communities to flourish and provide local services on a day to day basis negating the need to travel elsewhere.*
- 5.47 It is noted that the facilities are not prescriptive and in terms of Strasbourg Square which is already improving, the need and demand for a public house is no longer evident. The proposed retail unit on the ground floor will add to the facilities and the use of the building above for residential units is an appropriate use on a site which hasn't come forward for alternative uses in the last 7 years except the Funeral home which was withdrawn with local opposition to such a use on their doorstep.
- 5.48 As part of the overall Masterplan 2 new local centres are proposed as outlined below.

### Local Centres Sites

- 6.13 Eight sites for Local Centres as shown in Table 6.4 are allocated.

Table 6.4– Proposed Allocations for Local Centres and Community Facilities

Site Reference Number	Proposed allocations	Use
HV8(a)	Hales Barn, Haverhill	Mix of uses which could include leisure and recreation; health and community facilities; small scale retail development and education.
HV8(b)	Former Chalkstone Middle School, Millfields Way	
HV8(c)	Strasbourg Square	
HV8(d)	Leiston Road	
HV8(e)	Blair Parade	
HV8(f)	Hanchet End	
HV8(g)	North East Haverhill strategic growth area	The locations and mix of uses in the new local centers will be identified through the masterplan process.
HV8(h)	North West Haverhill strategic growth area	

- 5.49 The proposals are considered to be in line with Haverhill Vision 2031 with a presumption in favour of sustainable development and focussing in terms of leisure/community and retail in the town centre and growth areas to the north east and north west. The Commercial and Leisure Heart encompasses the High Street, Jubilee Walk, the bus interchange, the Stour Brook, Brook Service Road and Ehringshausen Way, all of which are in close proximity to the application site.

### **Statement of Community Involvement**

- 5.50 The proposed application has been discussed with the local community and key stakeholders, including local business owners. A public exhibition was also held, to which 120 local residents were invited to view the proposals and comment. 12 people attended the event and the feedback received was supportive of the designs and the principle of development. Some comments were raised in respect of the parking provision and requests for more parking for existing residents in the area to use, however this is not considered a material planning consideration given that the proposal is for an increase of spaces from that existing.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of The Vixen, a former public house to 18 apartments and two retail units with associated parking and landscaping.
- 6.2 The site is a vacant Public House on a prominent site which has been empty for 7 years and as a result the uninspiring building has become run down and is an eye sore in a prominent location. Both Greene King and Punch Taverns have been involved with the site previously but have evidently not been able to make a viable business operate in this location as they have not retained the site. The site has been well publicised in the local media and local people are evidently aware of the apparent need for the site to be improved. There is an opportunity to significantly improve the appearance of the site with a mixed use housing led scheme.
- 6.3 A review of alternative facilities close to the Vixen has been undertaken and it is evident that there are a number of Public Houses in close proximity. There are fifteen public houses within a 3 miles radius. The pubs in Haverhill are concentrated in the High Street area and surrounding settlements also have their own Public Houses. It is evident that there is no longer a demand for a public house on the estate with no company taking on the building and wishing to invest in the business.
- 6.4 St Edmundsbury Council is already investing in Strasbourg Square to improve the area for residents of the Chalkstone Estate. The Vixen which forms the basis of this application remains an eye sore in a locality which is generally being improved for the benefit of local people. The proposal will be a key part of the regeneration and rejuvenation of Strasbourg Square and will ensure that the appearance of the building will be dramatically improved and will contribute to providing housing for the local area. Strasbourg Square is characterised by mixed-use development and residential accommodation atop of commercial units and this proposal will therefore help to expand this community centre. A proposal to contribute to the mixed used character of Strasbourg Square is considered appropriate sustainable development in accordance with Planning Policies and the new ground floor retail units overlooking the Square will furthermore contribute to the vibrancy of this place.
- 6.5 The development will be of a high quality, contemporary design, responding to the surrounding building heights and using materials appropriate to the surrounding area. The redevelopment of the site provides opportunities for significant improvements in terms of the visual appearance and aesthetics of the site.
- 6.6 The re-use of this site for residential purposes has been demonstrated to fully accord with adopted development plan policies. Providing homes to meet local housing needs without the need for greenfield development within the open countryside.