

# Red Lion Public House

Vicarage Road, Watford



Acting on behalf of a new private owner, we secured planning permission to enable the mixed-use redevelopment of a former public house in Watford. The scheme allowed for the pub use to be retained, whilst permission was granted for eight new self-contained dwellings, within two new apartment blocks on associated land.

Previously owned by Watford Football Club, the Red Lion public house had seen better days and had been closed for two years. The pub building itself was locally listed and the wider site, which included an adjoining stable block and a significant parcel of land to the rear, was situated within a Conservation Area. Although it was historically associated with the building, the adjoining land had not been used for many years and was overgrown and subject to fly-tipping.

Planning Potential became involved with the site shortly after a pre-application submission had been made by the new owner. That initial submission was met with opposition from planning officers, residents and councillors, and resulted in the entire site being designated as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). Several trees on the wider site were also covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

We were engaged by the owner to provide advice and help find a way forward. We appointed heritage and tree consultants to provide expert advice on developing a credible scheme that would meet the council's policies. We worked with the scheme architects, Juice, to develop an appropriate scheme. The proposals sought to retain the existing buildings and ground floor commercial use, whilst redeveloping the adjoining vacant site to deliver two apartment blocks of eight flats.

The entire site – not just the public house – had been designated by the council as an Asset of Community Value, which created a further hurdle to delay redevelopment of the site. We held a series of meetings with planning officers and the manager of the council's property team. We initially established the implications of the ACV designation upon the redevelopment project and subsequently agreed the necessary steps that would be required should planning permission be granted.

We also engaged with ward councillors, local residents and businesses. A newsletter that outlined the proposals and sought feedback was sent to nearly 200 homes and local businesses. Despite the high level of public interest in the site, this consultation resulted in just 14 objections being received against the proposals, and the scheme was presented to planning committee with an officer's recommendation for approval.



Unfortunately, the officer's recommendation was overturned by the committee. We were therefore required to proceed with an appeal, via written representations. The appeal was upheld in November 2016, with the Inspector stating that: "the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of The Square Conservation Area."



### Summary of achievements

- Public consultation and engagement
- Attending meetings to convey the benefits of the scheme locally
- Detailed discussions and negotiations with council officers regarding issues of principle, use, design and ACV
- Preparation of a planning submission, including detailed planning analysis
- Monitoring of the application process and keeping councillors and residents informed
- Preparation and submission of successful written representation appeal

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