

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2022/5198/P	Erik Carlson	21/03/2023 22:30:18	OBJ	Dear Mr Young,

I am writing to object to the 2 recent planning applications for 94 Mill Lane. Your references 2022/5197/P and 2022/5198/P. I am submitting the same objection text for both as both applications were submitted at the same time by the same party and, I suspect, that one is a contingency for the other but with the same ultimate goal. I think you need to consider both applications together please.

2022/5197/P is asking to convert much of the ground floor and the entire basement into a poor-quality home. While it does preserve a small amount of retail space, the lack of supporting utility space and basic facilities greatly reduces the potential uses.

2022/5198/P wants to convert the entire ground floor and basement to a home, taking this retail space away from the street. History suggests that once shops are converted in this way they are seldom changed back.

The applicant says that the property has been continuously marketed but that there has been no interest. However, I know for a fact that several locals (I know of at least 4) have tried to contact "The BGP" to enquire about renting the shop. From the time the sign went up on the shop until the first objections to this planning application appeared on your portal Messages left on the answerphone were not replied to, WhatsApp messages either went nowhere or were not replied to and emails / messages via the website went unanswered. Only after this truth was stated on an early objection to the planning applications (this month) were any of the messages answered, months after they were originally left. This strongly suggests to me that the applicant was not really interested in renting out the shop, and their suggestion that they tried to let it out seems disingenuous. If the council would like to verify this, please contact me and I will put you in touch with those that I know of, who have made unsuccessful enquiries in the months that the shop was supposedly marketed.

The applicant supports their case by illustrating how many other shops in the same street are vacant, as if there is no need for so many shops any more. However, they seem to have forgotten that most of these shops were not empty before the pandemic. So many businesses across the country closed in those unfortunate times. We have lost some lovely shops and other businesses. To suggest that the current state of the high street is a true representation is unfair in my opinion. The council can easily verify this by using Google Streetview to rewind to earlier photographic states of this high street, and no doubt also look at business rates records to verify that until Covid it was normal for most of the shops in the high street to be occupied and trading. High streets are a vital part of the community, please give them a chance to recover! I prefer a thriving high street bringing visitors to the area, providing jobs, services and community, as opposed to a dead high street with poor quality residential conversions.

I am told that these applications violate NDP policies 2, 12, and 14. I don't think there is a strong argument for allowing an exception, particularly for so many violations.

I am also worried about the design of the lightwell which creates an obstruction to pedestrians, especially those with impaired vision. In the past the council has usually (correctly in my opinion) refused permission for structures that permanently block the pavement. If a lightwell is needed then other designs are available that are flush with the pavement surface and don't create an obstacle. As with other parts of this application this is just poor design. I know that some other shops in the street do have similar lightwells, but none have

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				<p>happened in the 12 years I have lived here and I believe that best practice and planning policy have moved on, just because something was once allowed historically does not make it acceptable today.</p> <p>I am suspicious that two applications have been submitted together. I am concerned that their preference is the full conversion 2022/5198/P, but that if that's refused, they'd go for the part conversion 2022/5197/P with small amount of retail space that will be hard to use and then later have another go at applying for change of use on the basis that nobody would rent the space that they have deliberately made less desirable.</p> <p>I respectfully ask that you refuse these applications and suggest that the applicant makes more of an effort to rent the shop.</p>
2022/5198/P	Anousheh Bromfield	17/03/2023 17:10:59	OBJ	<p>This proposal, if granted, would result in the loss of a valuable retail space. The applicant's claims regarding inability to obtain commercial rent for the premises are not accepted. Further, it is not accepted that the solution to vacant commercial properties is residential conversion. That will result in the loss of amenities and vibrancy of Mill Lane as the area's local high street. It would also affect the remaining businesses and threaten their existence. This proposal does not benefit the local community and violate NDP Policies 2 &amp; 14; it should therefore be refused.</p>
2022/5198/P	Michael Poulard	17/03/2023 09:44:00	OBJ	<p>The Gondar and Agamemnon Residents Association (GARA) objects to this application and recommends refusal.</p> <p>GARA exists to protect and enhance the environment and amenities of residents of these two streets; Gondar Gardens adjoins Mill Lane. Mill Lane as a designated neighbourhood centre provides many diverse and essential amenities for our residents.</p> <p>It is the retail spaces that provide these amenities and these are protected in the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Development Plan, which GARA contributed to.</p> <p>In terms of Mill Lane as a popular and functioning street, corner units are of particular importance. The conversion of an active retail frontage to a private frontage would cause significant harm to the neighbourhood.</p> <p>The residential accommodation proposed is of poor quality, with very limited daylight in the bedrooms and no space for storage of bins and bicycles. It does not conform to policy in relation to provision of amenity space and fails significantly on aspects of good design.</p>