

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A DEVELOPMENT CONTROL FORUM

18 June 2003

10.00am - 11.40am

APPLICATION: C/03/00406/FP - Rear of 5/33 Montague Road, Sandy Lane

Present:

For Applicant

Paul Harney, Architect, Paul Harney Associates
David Henry, FPD Savills

For Petitioners

Ilona Roth, Resident
Bruce Kinsey, Resident
Jeremy Blake, Resident and Architect

Members of Planning Committee: Councillors Baker, Blencowe, Harrison, Hipkin, Schofield, Slatter and Wright.

Ward Councillor: Councillor Nimmo-Smith.

Officers: Peter Carter, Principal Planning Officer (Chair), Jennie Parsons, Planning Officer.

Case by Applicant

1. The Architect, Paul Harney described:
 - a. the design including materials to be used and how it reflected the character of the area and borrowed elements of different buildings was shown by photographs.
 - b. the layout, to ensure minimum overlooking of neighbouring properties.
 - c. the provision of underground car and cycle parking, providing more safety for residents as each dwelling had its own direct basement access to the underground parking.
 - d. provision in 15 of the 18 homes of disabled access and facilities to provide Lifetime Homes.
 - e. All trees to be retained except for one which was in a dangerous condition. These would not be harmed by the development.
 - f. The height of the houses was the normal domestic scale and similar to the heights of the houses in Montague Road.
 - g. Significant open space had been provided in the form of communal gardens which were overlooked, providing a safe and secure environment, particularly for children.
 - h. All dwellings had private gardens.
 - i. Sandy Lane to be upgraded to public highway standards as required by the County Council.
 - j. Traffic circulation on site met the appropriate standards.
 - k. This land was allocated for development in the adopted Cambridge Local Plan (1996) and again, in the new First Deposit Draft Local Plan. The whole site would not be developed because it was not all available.
 - l. It had been carefully designed to meet Government and City Council guidelines.

Case by Petitioners

Ilona Roth, Bruce Kinsey (Local Residents) and Jeremy Blake (Local Resident and Architect) spoke on behalf of residents in Chesterton Road, De Freville Avenue and Montague Road.

2. They accepted the *principle* of a housing development on the site and welcomed a full upgrading of the Sandy Lane access road, so long as key issues were addressed - safe access and egress at the De Freville Avenue end, the provision of a barrier at the Elizabeth Way end, and careful constraints on the level of street lighting, rights of access and parking.
3. 18 dwellings was a not unreasonable number of additional households on the site and was consistent with the Local Plan.
4. However they had a number of concerns about the development and its impact on the surrounding area.
5. Sandy Lane was described as green, pleasant and full of character with magnificent trees and a wealth of shrubs at the margins. The existing houses on all sides of the development had substantial gardens with mature trees.
6. This harboured a wealth of wildlife – animals, amphibians, butterflies and birds. They feared much would disappear, given the very urban quality of the development.
7. Concern about the use of basement parking - how would fumes be extracted, cycle parking there was inappropriate, access for the disabled and children's buggies would be difficult.
8. Objections to the design - terraces placed at right angles to each other in a tight formation were not in keeping with the built 'grain' of the area; the private gardens were small and likely to be shaded by the large trees; the open space was not easily accessible to most of the houses; details such as window dimensions, eaves, large flat-roofed areas had not been carefully considered and the use of dormer windows was inappropriate.
9. They were very concerned at the height of the proposed buildings in relation to the north side of Montague Road. The important dimension was not the eaves height but the ridge height which was considerably higher than the existing houses. The dormer windows would overlook the existing properties.
10. Concern about the proximity of the proposed 4 large terraced houses close to gardens of the Montague Road houses, with no possibility of screening by trees.
11. An alternative design layout without basement parking which allowed larger private gardens and more open space which could also be available to all of the local community. This also allowed a development into the land to the east in the future.
12. They foresaw several traffic and parking issues such as the need for safety measures at key junctions; where those who currently parked in the lock up garages on Sandy Lane would park in the future; exacerbation of substantial overflow of parked cars from the new development already being experienced from the St ???? Park development on the far side of Elizabeth Way.
13. Concern that other developments of sites in the area might be in train which might not be in the interests of the local community.

Case Officer

14. A full application for 18 dwellings on a .424 hectare site was received on 14 April 2003. It included a design and transport statement and a site plan. There would be 4 terraces of 6, 5, 4 and 3 terraced houses in each. These consisted of 4 storeys – basement, lower ground, first floor and second floor (in the roof space with dormer windows). There were 22 parking spaces in the basement along with cycle parking.
15. The following consultation responses had been received:
 - Cambridgeshire County Council - requested a contribution to educational facilities.
 - Anglian Water - asked for more details.
 - The Disability Panel - questions about standards and that the steps were inaccessible and there was no parking for the disabled (the applicants had responded to this last point).
 - Highways Authority – concerned that no public body had control over Sandy lane.
 - Environmental Health – desk top study about contamination will be required; how would the underground car park be ventilated; on site waste and recycling storage required; 2 dwellings had inadequate lighting.
 - Police Architectural Liaison Officer– access to the car park needed to be controlled and additional security was needed.
16. The following representations had been received:
 - Letters: 8 of objection, 5 in support and 6 with comments/questions – concerning trees, density, inadequate parking, loss of privacy, noise, disturbance, height, architecture, affordable housing.
 - Sandy Lane Residents' Association – concerning the future of the Lane; more details needed.
17. Additional information had been provided in early May – tree survey, traffic statement, amended site plan showing minor amendments to the terrace of 4.
18. Officers were looking at policy procedures, mainly the Structure Plan and the Local Plan but also the Design Guide, disabled issues.

Members Comments

19. Impressed with the petitioners' alternative design – but was it possible because of 3-bedroom houses rather than 4-5 beds?
20. The petitioners replied that the alternative design could have 4-5 bedroom dwellings.
21. Concern re whether the design really was a Lifetime Home eg what was the width of the staircases so that lifts could be installed?
22. The applicant said that there were disabled access and facilities to two floors.
23. What was the major issue that divided the petitioners and the applicant?
24. What should be the relationship between the 18 new houses and their neighbours?
25. The petitioners replied that there was no single dividing issue.
26. Welcomed the common ground of the number of units as 18.
27. What pre-application consultation was there between developers and residents?
28. Was the developer prepared to meet the residents and re-look at the basement parking? Did the alternative design allow provision for parking?

29. The applicant confirmed that there had been numerous meetings over a period of 2 years mostly about the upgrade of Sandy Lane. He said they would not be prepared to meet the residents again about the design, considering the matter to have gone to far.
30. The petitioners pointed out that the consultation had been with the Sandy Lane Residents Association and not with other sub-groups of residents. The petitioners said their alternative design involved car parking in the front gardens.
31. The applicant clarified that upgrading of the road would be controlled through the planning process. An adopted road was needed in order to sell the houses. The Council will require a bond to be put in place for road construction.
32. Would the developer look at alternative ways to deal with cars eg that proposed at the new Brooklands Avenue site?
33. How had the developer anticipated a coherent extension of the site should the rest of it become available for development?
34. While the current development was below the threshold where affordable housing was a requisite, the whole site was above the threshold. Were there precedents to ensure that developers did not escape their obligations in this regard?
35. Was there a clear commitment to no occupation of the site until Sandy Lane was fully made up to the required standard?
36. The Chair clarified that as yet the terms for the upgrading of the road had not been finalized and it was a requirement for the development to go ahead.
37. Would not want gated access to become the theme in Sandy Lane if there were developments at other sites.
38. The architectural design did not fit in to its surroundings nor was it clearly different like the Petersfield Mansions development in an area with a similar mix of period houses.
39. If the adjacent site were obtained would a second phase be compatible with this application?
40. The applicant said the adjacent site was not for sale and if it became available might not be sold to them. He was of the opinion that a second phase would be compatible.
41. Were the original objectors informed of the May amendments?
42. The Case Officer confirmed that all those who received the original notification and all those who objected were informed about the May amendments.

Summing Up

43. The applicant re-affirmed that the choice of development was based on an assessment of each site individually, that there had been considerable consultation with local residents, that not all residents were against the development, that there was a good level of support from some.
44. The petitioners were not yet satisfied despite the May amendments; they saw it as a missed opportunity and had particular concerns about the use of basement parking which also did not conform with the requirements for disability access; the impact on the surrounding area; the layout; the massing and the upgrading of Sandy Lane.
45. The Chair confirmed that these minutes would be incorporated in the report on the application to Planning Committee.