

# CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF A DEVELOPMENT CONTROL FORUM

21 September 2005

10.00am – 11.05am

**APPLICATION:** 05/0829/FUL 41 High Street, East Chesterton, Cambridge

Present:

### **For Applicant**

Ken Neale, Neale Associates, Architect  
Reza Assavadian, Applicant

### **For Petitioners**

Michael Bond, Old Chesterton Residents Association  
Tony de Luca, Resident, High Street Chesterton  
David Brodie, Resident, High Street Chesterton

Members of Planning Committee: Councillors Hipkin and Hymans

Apologies had been received from Councillors Bailey, Baker, Blencowe, Dixon, Dryden, Reid, Slatter and R Smith.

Officers: John Summers, Head of Development Services (Chair), Tony Collins, Case Officer

The following personal interests were declared by councillors:

Councillor Hymans knows Mr Bond through working together in a voluntary capacity.  
Councillor Hipkin is a personal friend of Mr Neale.

### **Case by Applicant**

Ken Neale spoke on behalf of the applicant.

1. He welcomed the opportunity for further dialogue with residents during the Forum and indicated that there was some scope for re-design depending on what matters were raised.
2. He outlined the development describing it as falling into 3 distinct areas. The existing main building to be kept as it was a building of local interest and converted into 9 two storey houses. The existing flat roofed garage to be demolished and replaced with an L-shaped development of 5 one-bedroomed flats. Part of the site would provide car parking and there was space for bicycles and bins provided. The access point to the site would be changed.
3. Using a map of the development he pointed out these key features.

### **Case by Petitioners**

Michael Bond highlighted general points residents wanted to make and Tony de Luca and David Brodie spoke as close neighbours to the proposed development:

4. Michael Bond explained that residents were not objecting to the principle of conversion of the existing main building to residential development but were

objecting strongly to what they considered to be an overdevelopment of the site that altered the entire character of the setting provided by the range of buildings proposed.

5. The proposal to build along the High Street frontage raised serious concerns as it was out of scale with the existing buildings on the site and would also destroy the open aspect of the yard.
6. David Brodie said that he had lived next door to the site for the past 20 years in a family house and so he knew the area well. He welcomed the development of the existing building but considered the proposed new building to be too domineering, bulky and tall with no symmetry with the Victorian houses on the west of it nor with the older buildings to the east. The proposed archway access was dominant and like an ugly hole. He regretted the loss of the open appearance of the existing courtyard.
7. Tony de Luca said that he also lived and worked next to the proposed development. He considered that he would lose considerable light and that the proposed building would close in his property. As the development was in a conservation area he had been confident the proposal would be in keeping and it was not. The new building would back on to numbers 37 and 39 in part of what were the original gardens to these two properties. He would have preferred a horseshoe shape to the new building by extending on to the existing building; the design proposed would hide the existing building and that would be a pity.
8. Michael Bond said that the open aspect of the site was much valued by local residents and they had hoped that any developer would create a small square of houses set back off the High Street similar to the one created at St Andrews Road adjacent to the new St Andrews Hall. He pointed out that, at this point, the High Street was very narrow.
9. He said residents were also concerned about the loss of green areas currently provided by the trees on the site and they would welcome more greenery.
10. The report about traffic movements said there would be fewer. Residents considered that due to the residential use of the site there would be an increase in traffic movements mainly at week ends and in the evenings than had been the case when the site was a commercial one.
11. Residents were concerned about the extent of the proposed development at its western side. The existing flat roofed building had been constructed by a previous owner for additional storage following purchase of part of the back gardens of the neighbouring houses.
12. He said that the access barely reached the standard required for disabled access. The building would look out of keeping.
13. Having seen inside the existing building he had been impressed with the internal floors and would their historical significance be respected.
14. Petrol storage tanks were known to have been on the site and residents thought they were still there and had concerns about possible contamination.
15. In summary, this was an important site for the village and had generated much interest from residents.
16. David Brodie then spoke from his own personal point of view. He thought the new building proposed on the west end was small and would provide little light for whoever lived there. In addition, the property went right up to the boundary of existing houses. He was concerned that construction of this would damage the roots of the large healthy 20-year old tree at the boundary. It had been planted as an amenity and was there before the adjoining building had been constructed. He was also concerned about over-looking on to the patio area of his garden. If

any windows were fitted later, or if the opaque glass were removed, he was concerned that these would overlook his property.

## Case Officer

17 The application was received on 27 July 2005. Neighbours were notified and a notice put in the Cambridge Evening News on 19 August.

18 Five written representations from residents and one from Old Chesterton Residents Association had been received as well as the petition.

19 The main themes of the representations were:

- Principle of Development – acceptable but regarded as over development
- Conservation Area Impact – Height, modern design, the old corn depot (a building of local interest) being hidden and loss of the open aspect in front of it would all have adverse impact
- Design –domination of car parking, poor residential environment for prospective residents in the development
- Arboricultural matters – Trees to the front of the site could be lost and a tree at the boundary could be damaged
- Amenity – loss of privacy and outlook; loss of light; overbearing visual impact; increased noise
- Highways – increase in traffic unacceptable; access to the central car parking area inadequate and dangerous

20 Comments had been invited and received from the statutory authorities as follows:

- County Archaeological Service – high possibility of there being significant finds so a conditions requiring a programme of archaeological investigation recommended.
- Cambridge Highways Agency – visibility splays would only be adequate if there were empirical evidence that traffic speed was 20mph or less.
- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service – no objections.
- Environment Agency – no objections but recommended conditions regarding surface water drainage and pollution control.
- Environmental Health – intrusive investigation required to ascertain levels of pollution if any. Conditions recommended including one requiring a remediation strategy
- City Council Access Officer – bathroom doors should open out; dimensions of toilets could be in breach of regulations.
- Arboricultural Officer - Trees have amenity value but are impractical in the location in which they have self seeded. They do not meet the criteria for a TPO.
- Conservation & Design – the new building is too close to the southern wing of the old corn yard building and there are insufficient views into the space in front of that building. The relationship in height between the old and the new buildings is not felt to be satisfactory. Insufficient survey to justify plans for installing a second floor in the existing building. Insufficient detail about the detail of aspects of the conversion such as the windows. The proposal had merit but was not acceptable in its present form.

21. The S106 agreement concerning contributions to the costs of education, open space and community provision was expected to be completed in the near future.

## Members Comments

22. As Conservation Champion for the Council, concern re listed status of the building. Would the applicant clarify?
- A: Ken Neale said that it was not a listed building but had been classed as a Building of Local Interest. He had had discussions with the Conservation Officer about the conversion design, including how many 2-storey houses and issues of access.
23. Would the Case Officer clarify the response of the Highways Authority?
- A: Tony Collins said that the present visibility splays would only be adequate if the speed limit were 20mph or less.  
Michael Bond said that many cars were driven at considerably more than that in this stretch of road.
24. The Chair asked the Case Officer if he wished to make any other comments about the application.
- A: Tony Collins said that the black roofed single storey garage in the south west corner of the site was to be demolished. It was adjacent to a high wall at the back and the Conservation & Design view was that removal of this high wall would enhance the development.  
Ken Neale confirmed that the wall was about 4metres high.
25. Where exactly are the trees mentioned by the petitioners?
- A: Tony Collins explained that there was 1 ash and several sycamores that were multi-stemmed and self seeded. They looked like a single tree. The view of the Arboricultural Officer was that they had no long term future because of how they had grown. Even pruning and trimming would not help.  
Michael Bond said that residents accepted the view of the Arboricultural Officer.
26. Had the structural problems of converting the existing building really been explored in depth?
- A: Michael Bond said that the Conservation Officer had not yet been inside the building. Residents thought that there were a lot of oak timbers that were very strong still. They were happy with the principle of conversion to houses rather than flats. He added that they were not averse to flats in appropriate places.  
Ken Neale said that they had taken advice from structural engineers and both they and Building Control were happy with what was proposed.
27. Is the access really a tunnel? If so, would that not have an adverse impact on people living above and around it from the number of traffic journeys?
- A: Ken Neale confirmed that it was. However, there were no windows on the ground floor facing on to the tunnel. The insulation would have to satisfy the Environmental Health officer. He confirmed that there would be 3metres between any car and a person within the house.
28. Would the petitioners please say more about why 14 dwellings was over-development?
- A: Michael Bond said that it was the equivalent of 100 dwellings per hectare which was above the 80 the government used as a guide to city centre levels.  
Tony de Luca said the proposed building would dwarf his property and looked ugly. He would prefer 4 nice houses and a nice courtyard.
29. Are all the living rooms on the first floor? If so, would this not lead to more overlooking of neighbouring properties?

- A: Ken Neale said there could be some overlooking but the distances involved were within guidelines. He also confirmed that ground floor bedrooms were separated by green space from the car park area.

### **Summing Up**

- 30 Ken Neale addressed the following concerns raised by the residents:
- All the petrol storage tanks had been decommissioned and signed off by the relevant authority.
  - The points made about access for the disabled would be re-looked at.
  - He reiterated that the traffic would be less in their view.
  - He acknowledged that a U shaped building had never been considered because of the impact of a two storey building on neighbours near the single storey garage.
  - He agreed to ensure that the tree at the boundary of the property would not be damaged by the building works by conforming to the standards and guidelines laid down for the protection of tree roots during construction.
  - He said they would go away and consider further the points that had been raised and see if re-design were required in which case the application would be withdrawn.
31. Michael Bond thanked the applicant for being willing to do this and commended the residents' proposed solution which could still retain high density housing but with a better appearance. The residents wanted to look forward to having residential development on the site that was something special.

The Chair confirmed that these minutes would be incorporated in the report on the application to the Planning Committee.