

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Notes of Development Control Forum

• Former Brunswick School

20 August 2008

10.00am –1.20pm

Application No: 08/0871/FUL
Site Address: Former Brunswick School, Newmarket Road
Description: Erection of 195 dwellings and 253 student rooms (to be provided in lieu of affordable housing), community cafe (up to 130 sq.m), new public square and associated works and following the demolition of all buildings and structures on site in order to facilitate comprehensive redevelopment.
Applicant: Berkeley Homes (South-East London) Ltd
Agent: Januarys Chartered Surveyors, 54-62 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8DZ
Lead Petitioners: 1 - Mrs Judith Gay 2 - Lynette Gilbert
Address: 7 Evening Court 47 Riverside
Cambridge Cambridge CB5 8HN
CB5 8EA
Case Officer: Angela Briggs
Text of Petition 1: Judith Gay - See agenda
Text of Petition 2: Lynette Gilbert - See agenda

Present:

For Applicant

Paul Belton - Januarys
Julian Curry - Berkley Homes
Harry Lewis – Berkley Homes

Dave Ellis - WSP
Eric Holding - JTP

For Petitioners

Havid Halford Riverside RA
Lynette Gilbert Riverside RA
James Woodburn Cambridge Cycling Campaign
Alex Cooper - Resident
Arabella Cooper - Resident

Members of Planning Committee

City Councillors Al Bander, Baker, Blair, Blencowe, Dryden and Hipkin

Apologies

City Councillors Dixon, Holness and Smart

Declarations of Interest by Members

Cllr Al Bander as a member of the Cambridge Cycling Campaign and Cllr Dryden as his wife was a pupil of Brunswick School.

Officers

Sarah Dyer (Chair), Angela Briggs (Case Officer) and Toni Birkin

(Committee Manager)

Case by Applicants

Harry Lewis made the following points:

- 1) Berkeley's has a history both locally and nationally for producing quality developments that take into account the views of the local community
- 2) Terms were agreed for this project in 2006
- 3) There have been 37 consultation events over the last 18 months.
- 4) They are open to negotiating with neighbours and are keen to reach a solution
- 5) The plan exceed the minimum density and this is desirable for a development in such a central location
- 6) On site parking will be 68% of guidance
- 7) Cycle storage is above guidance levels in line with green travel plans
- 8) The Arts Café will add to community facilities
- 9) Will achieve sustainability level 3
- 10) The mix of various housing types and community facilities in the area

David Ellis made the following points:

- 11) Been involved with the project for 18 months
- 12) Project had considered the access options and their links to the wider highways network
- 13) Site offers three vehicle access points
 - Existing CRC entrance
 - Evening Court
 - Walnut Tree Avenue
- 15) CRC entrance narrow and close to junction; considered sub standard and impractical
- 16) Traffic exiting new development would reverse the flow of the traffic
- 17) Proximity to roundabout was a safety hazard
- 18) Yellow box junction considered but did not solve the problems
- 19) Uneven spread of traffic across lanes added to difficulties
- 20) Considered various methods to prevent right turn access but this might result in undesirable U turns at other points along the road.
- 21) Evening Court is an adopted Highway
- 22) Low traffic flow
- 23) Proximity to Zebra crossing limits length of access lane
- 24) Difficult to increase capacity although some increased use is possible
- 25) Walnut Tree Avenue current serves a caretaker house and street parking
- 26) Height restricted to 10 feet under Elizabeth Way Bridge
- 27) Site drops to river level and use of this entrance would reduce the dig and make best use of available space
- 28) Narrow in places
- 29) Passing places would be provided
- 30) Profile produced and showed queues of one or two at most which could be accommodated in space available
- 31) Considered best option for car access but unsuitable for heavy vehicles
- 32) Sites of similar size and mix surveyed for trip numbers and considered expectable
- 33) CRC entrance to be used for disabled student access
- 34) Walnut tree Avenue access expected to produce 45 cars in the peak AM period
- 35) Evening Court to be used the town houses access and visitor parking
- 36) Suggested that work could tie in with the improvements to riverside cycle network and provide a continuation to the cycle and footpath networks

- 37) The three access points will provide a balanced access
 38) Estimated one additional vehicle per hour
 Mr John Thompson made the following points:
 37) The design rationale was to produce something 'of Cambridge'
 38) A good team producing high quality work
 39) Looked at history of the area: mixed use and proximity to Grafton Centre
 40) Difficult site due to plateau and drop off down to river, difficult access, noise and pollution
 41) Three elements to design context
- Relationship to river and rear views of site
 - Courtyard forms within City scale
 - Contemporary language and 'of Cambridge'
- 42) Simple forms work best in city locations
 43) Design evolved over a year in consultation
 44) Build footprint within site is currently 30% proposal would be 39%
 45) Overshadowing is BRE compliant and there should be little or no impact on Evening Court
 46) Overlooking has been designed out to an acceptable level

Case By Petitioners

Alex Cooper presented the views of the first petitioners against the application:

- 47) Evening court residents agree with the need to develop the site
 48) Had hoped this would be seen as an advantage to develop something very special and sympathetic to the area
 49) Talks with Berkeley have been encouraging
 50) Disappointed with the model and the proposal
 51) Aspect from river not respected
 52) Does not reflect the City we are proud
 53) Density staggeringly high: 5 times minimum
 55) Access through Evening court inappropriate for the suggested increase in volume
 56) Residents driveways would be accessed by crossing the main access road to the site
 57) All service and refuse vehicles would have to use this access point
 58) This is currently about 9 per week and would increase to over 200
 59) Site to over 2 parking spaces per house when local plan suggests only one
 60) Current access to CRC has been used safely for many years and could be used
 61) Walnut Tree Ave is also a safer access route
 62) Fears that extra through traffic will increase crime
 63) Compromise to residents safety and increased traffic noise
 64) Fear over loss of privacy and overlooking in particular, numbers 6, 7, 8 and 9
 65) Applicants visuals did not show aspect from Evening Court
 66) Picture windows being proposed when Evening Court was built
 67) Number 9 would be overlooked by three properties to an unacceptable level
 68) Main fears:
- Loss of light
 - Loss of privacy
 - Loss of enjoyment of gardens
 - Increased noise and traffic
- 69) Not opposed to development in principle but need to be more imaginative and positive
 Lynette Gilbert and David Halford presented the views of the second group of petitioners against the application:

- 70) Also not opposed to the development in principle
- 71) Can the existing CRC entrance be improved to enable safe use?
- 72) Is it acceptable for a development of this nature to route traffic through narrow streets in a flood zone?
- 73) Current access has work well for many years
- 74) Will the PM peak be a problem or not? Applicant has suggested this will be less than current use.
- 75) Not currently an accident black spot with only three accidents in three years
- 75) Contested the width of the roads in the Riverside Area: in places 3.3 or 3.2 meters wide and therefore unsafe for cycle passing
- 76) Contested the width of the existing CRC access and asked if anyone had measured it accurately
- 77) Distance from junction could be improved to comply to current highways requirements by relocating the existing footpath to the other side if the entrance
- 78) Questioned the relevance of highway guideline to this stretch of road as by it's nature it has slow moving traffic and is therefore proximity to junction less hazardous
- 79) Increased traffic would have a disproportionate impact on Walnut Tree Avenue
- 80) This is currently a very popular route for walkers and cyclist due to lack of traffic
- 81) Up to 300 cycles use the area in the morning peak
- 82) Plan would add 80 extra cars in this period to narrow streets with a lack of passing places
- 83) Would limit the opportunity to create a recreational area linking the two commons
- 84) Would create pinch point under Elizabeth Way Bridge
- 85) Existing traffic in the area would meet oncoming cars
- James Woodburn of The Cambridge Cycling Campaign made the following points:
- 86) Cambridge currently enjoys good cycling results with up to 25% of residents cycling to work
- 87) Plan is too car focused and parking within the plan should be reduced
- 88) Non car ownership should be encouraged on this unique site
- 89) Traffic should be using main CRC entrance and not disrupting popular existing cycle route
- 90) Plans need to be improved to ease cycle access to the site with ramps at site entrances
- 91) Improvements need to be made to the cycle routes planned within the site as they currently do not link areas together and are not wide enough
- 92) Improvements are needed to the access points for student cycle parking to improve ease of use
- 93) Further suggestions are emerging and the current plan should be withdrawn and replaced with a less car focused design

The Case Officer's comments:

- 94) Objections have been received from a number of groups
- 95) There have also been 33 e-mails and 93 letters of objection from individuals
- 96) Objections have centred on the following:
- Increased traffic
 - Proposed access routes
 - Design out of keeping with a conservation area
 - Lack of affordable housing
 - Loss of light and privacy to neighbouring properties

Members questions and comments

- 97) Could this proposal do better on sustainability issues? Code 3 is now standard and many sites in the pipeline are proposing 4 or 5.
- A. Code three is currently voluntary and other elements of the original design such as a bio mass boiler were rejected due to the existing poor air quality of the area.
- 98) Could a car free option provide a trade off for the bio mass boiler?
- A. No as they produce different omissions. Parking levels within the site were agreed early in the design process to minimize overspill parking in the surrounding streets. Case Officer stated that it is not possible to impose a car free requirement
- 99) Question to petitioners: What concessions will make the proposal acceptable?
- A. Reduced density. Removal or reduction of feature tower and a safe way to use CRC entrance as the main site entrance. Find an acceptable way to ban right turns into and out of site without creating unacceptable u turns elsewhere
- 100) If a car free site is not possible, could on site parking be reduced along with the introduction of a Car Club vehicle?
- A. Developers are working with the existing club Street Car and 2 spaces will be provided. However, the problem is likely to be trip numbers rather than car numbers.
- 101) Members asked for clarification of refuse and delivery vehicle access across the site
- A. These will be services through the Evening Court or CRC entrance. There will be 2 access points with turning heads. Conforms to guidance on distance from properties.
- 102) Could the density be reduced to decrease the bulk and height of design and reduce traffic?
- A. Some height reduction may be possible but a high density is desirable in this type of city centre location
- 103) The current plan creates a conflict of use under Elizabeth Way bridge. Can a safety audit lead to a solution that will resolve the issues?
- A. The Highways department will comment on the design as the plans progress through the planning process. Residents can also comment later.
- 104) The main issue appears to be access and the choice of Walnut Tree Avenue as the main car access point. Has the rationale behind this been proven?
- A. The Chair pointed out that the application will be considered 'as is'.
- 105) How were cycle route through the site agreed on?
- A. Discussion with various groups led to the proposed routes. The route through the site gives pedestrians priority and has good disabled access. Cycles are encouraged to use Walnut Tree Avenue route that will also reduce the number of cyclist using Midsummer common which it has been suggested reduces its amenity value.
- 106) The question of overlooking appears unclear.
- A. Overlooking has largely been designed out. However, some change in circumstances for neighbours is not uncommon when sites are developed. Further design amendments may be possible

Summing Up by the Applicant

- 107) This site is outside the Controlled Parking Zone and the suggested parking levels are well below numbers allowed
- 108) The through routes across the site for pedestrians and cyclist have been agreed in consultation with Cambridge City council officer.

- 109) Modifications to the terraced properties to address loss of privacy issues are on-going
- 110) Keen to support cycling and improve local cycle routes.
- 111) Parking space provision has been reduced. However, trip generation is the real issue
- 112) Design has been arrived at with care and is 'of Cambridge'
- 113) Overlooking issues being addressed
- 114) Proposed cycle storage is of high standard well above minimum levels
- 115) Loss of daylight concerns unfounded as proposal has passed recognised tests
- 116) Petitioners information on the access routes is selective and does not give the whole picture. Garage business next to CRC entrance not taken into account

Summing Up by the Petitioners – against the application

- 117) Design and density unsuitable
- 118) Wasted opportunity to create something special on a unique site
- 119) Clarity needed on CRC entrance
- 120) Proposed increase in vehicle numbers using Evening Court unacceptable
- 121) Overlooking issues not fully addressed
- 122) Proposal in conflict with local priorities to reduce car use
- 123) Proposal will increase traffic flow in quiet residential streets and create hazards
- 124) Disruption to well used existing cycle routes
- 125) Increased emissions due to stop start traffic in Walnut Tree Avenue
- 126) Should illegal U turns be considered a cause for concern?
- 127) Are we looking for a solution to a problem that does not exist?
- 128) CRC entrance has been used safely for many years
- 129) This meeting has highlighted discrepancies:
 - Is site inside the Controlled Parking Zone?
 - How did cycling across the common come to be seen as diminishing its value?
 - Will cyclists be in conflict with the disabled and with pedestrians?
 - Cycle parking issues not fully addressed