

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Notes of a Development Control Forum

13 Chesterton Road

11 February 2009

11.55am – 1.05pm

Application No: 09/0013/FUL & 09/0014/CAC
Site Address: 13 Chesterton Road
Description: 09/0013/FUL – Erection of 12 apartments with associated car and cycle parking and landscaping
09/0014/CAC – Demolition of existing building
Applicant: Mr Aldo Marino
Agent: Jon Burgess, Beacon Planning
Lead Petitioner: Joshua Wedlake
Case Officer: Catherine Linford

Present:

For Applicant

Aldo Marino – Owner
Andy Thompson – Planning Consultant

For Petitioners

Joshua Wedlake
Marie Melia
Anne Garvey
Alison Taylor

Members of the Planning Committee

Councillors Al Bander, Baker, Blair, Blencowe and Dixon

Declarations of Interest by Members

Members did not declare any interests

Officers

Sarah Dyer (Chair), Catherine Linford (Case Officer) and Fatima Rahman (Committee Manager)

Text of Petition

New building will be out of character with the rest of the road
Better to restore historical buildings than construct imitation styles
Car park area will encourage traffic along Chesterton Road
The car park will reduce rainwater run-off in the drainage area and cause flooding
Concerns that the recent fire could have been deliberate to make way for its demolition
New builds use more resources and energy than restorations –environmental concerns
Renewable energy strategies could be implemented on a restoration project
Important historical information relating to the building is archived at the Mill Road library but is currently unavailable due to the refurbishment of the city library
New builds generally have a 50 year lifespan. The existing building could last for many more years.

Case by Applicants

Mr Marino made the following points:

- 1) Has lived in Cambridge his whole life and holds a reputable family name due to their trading in roofing
- 2) Did not arrange for the theft and damage to the property
- 3) The thieves were caught by the police and entry by vandals was enforced
- 4) Has written to the Local Residents crime watch group in order to reduce or prevent similar incidents from happening
- 5) The fire has not worsened the condition
- 6) The property at the time of the sale did not attract much attention
- 7) Twice invited Magdalene students to visit the property, but was declined on both occasions

Mr Thompson made the following points:

- 8) There are two separate applications
- 9) The building is not listed and has not been identified by the Council's conservationist team
- 10) Propose to place two new frontage units
- 11) Cycle store proposal contains space for 15 cycles and new trees will be planted
- 12) Has submitted a revised application following the refusal of the August 2008 application
- 13) In the previous application, there were no objections from the Highway Authority, and the demolition of the building was accepted
- 14) The applicant decided not to appeal, but instead sought a new architect
- 15) The previous reasons for refusal have now been addressed and improved, hence the reason for the re-application
- 16) The proposals include decorative building work and privacy has been addressed to prevent residents overlooking into the Magdalene college students' residence
- 17) Cannot restore the building as it has split in half and the opposing sides are moving away from each other
- 18) There is a very large crack between the stair wall and the dining room wall has collapsed
- 19) The structural engineer has recommended that it cannot be restored because of the cost and safety
- 20) If one attempted to restore the building, they would need to re-build the Hertford Street side and the roof
- 21) The building has a 50 year life span and the structural damage is beyond repair
- 22) Have been recommended to demolish the building as soon as possible for safety reasons
- 23) The proposed building will need to be constructed using recycled materials from the current building
- 24) There is already a precedent of new buildings on Chesterton Road
- 25) The new proposals will try to stay in line with the character of the street and conservation
- 26) There is proposed allocated parking for residents and disabled residents
- 27) The Highway authority has not objected to the four parking spaces
- 28) Anticipate that cycling will be the option for the vast majority, but wishes to provide people with an alternative choice
- 29) If there are concerns with regard to the car park, then is happy to remove it from the proposals, although the allocated space is minimal
- 30) The background research on the property is outside of the applicant's control
- 31) There is no historic record of the house
- 32) The re-development of the site is desirable
- 33) The proposed house will contribute to the street

Case By Petitioners

There was circulation of information by the petitioners.

Mr Wedlake made the following points:

- 34) The building is a piece of history and forms part of the character of the street
- 35) There is a fundamental omission in the structural report
- 36) It does not include a structural cost analysis of renovation and retention
- 37) Daylight factor within the proposed development is likely to be below 2% and not particularly strong
- 38) An isolation study has indicated how solar radiation is likely to cause uneven internal heating due to the low floor to ceiling heights
- 39) This will result in the investment of artificial ventilation, heating and cooling systems which consume valuable energy resources
- 40) Although the proposals highlight solar panels on the roof, it will be offset against the damage done by the bad environmental design
- 41) In the UK, 50% of energy use is caused by the construction and running costs of buildings - this figure is steadily on the increase
- 42) Older houses are much more eco friendly and energy efficient
- 43) The internal airy spaces allow for natural ventilation
- 44) The strategic positioning of windows maximise solar gains
- 45) Heavy brick walls provide thermal mass and allow passive heating and cooling
- 46) Solar panels could be fitted onto the existing building
- 47) The argument that the new build will be a more eco-friendly house is invalid
- 48) The proposal for the new building will increase the overshadowing of Hertford Street and the gardens opposite
- 49) The sun is already quite obscured in the Hertford Street area
- 50) A three storey building will be more sensible and will keep in line with the area
- 51) The proposal for the car park will encourage unsustainable methods of transport
- 52) The building is already located in the centre of town, with close bus connections to Cambridge Station and the free City Circle
- 53) The ground plan area will increase and thereby reduce the amount of permeable surfaces
- 54) It will not be as effective as soil at reducing run off rainwater onto the road
- 55) Extra run off could lead to flooding and increase problems with icy pavements
- 56) Cambridge is in need of green spaces
- 57) Aware of the recent planning policy changes restricting the paving of gardens. Would like clarification behind the reasons and whether or not it applies to the building
- 58) Cambridge is historically such an important city and the council has an overall excellent record of trying to preserve it
- 59) The proposal for the new build has a design life of less than 60 years
- 60) Interested to see the environmental design details for the proposed new build and how it will reach part L compliance and the architects SAP calculations
- 61) Modern buildings suffer from severely failing environmental control systems
- 62) Meeting energy challenges in the next century to reuse, recycle and reduce energy demands are so important
- 63) It will be a travesty to allow the proposal to go ahead

Ms Melia made the following points:

- 64) The building is within a historical and conservation area as set out by the council
- 65) The idea is to protect the character and surroundings of the area
- 66) The building is definitive of the character of the area
- 67) Any new development will have to be sympathetic to the design
- 68) The Victorian Society has stated that it is the sort of house the conservation area has been designed to protect
- 69) Under the Building Act 1984 under sections 76, 77 and 78 gives the power to assess local buildings. The building is not considered dangerous under this act.
- 70) Under the act, the same considerations should be taken into account when looking at a building in a conservation area
- 71) Any property that is considered dangerous needs to ensure it is not dangerous to people who go to inspect it
- 72) The current building has significant internal Edwardian details
- 73) It is extremely important to see whether the statutory definition of danger matches that of the structural report
- 74) Perhaps an independent structural report should be carried out.

Ms Garvey made the following points:

- 75) Structural report does not highlight a comparative assessment of the costs of retention compared to demolition
- 76) There is no good reason to redevelop the building
- 77) The occurrence of the vandals indicates that some protection should be used, but it should not be used as an excuse for demolition
- 78) The building makes a positive contribution to the character of the area
- 79) Under 4.27 of the planning policy guidance the presumption is in favour of retaining the building
- 80) There should be clear evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to restore the building, however there is no indication of this having been done
- 81) Re-development is more retractive than restoration
- 82) The present gable is 10 metres. Under the new proposals, it will be overbearing as it proposed at 14 metres
- 83) The height and depth of the proposals do not match any buildings in the area
- 84) If the proposals go ahead, it will lead to the loss of a tree
- 85) The flats will be very small, dark and less than half headroom of two metres
- 86) There are no proposals to enhance or preserve the building

The Case Officer's comments:

Ms Linford made the following points:

- 87) 94 letters of representation with 150 signatures have been received
- 88) Conservation officer has stated that the demolition is acceptable subject to conditions
- 89) The Victorian Society has stated that the new proposals can go ahead so long as there is no way of restoring the building, and that the new building remains in character
- 90) Environmental Officer has no objections subject to conditions

Member's questions and comments:

- 91) Cllr Baker commented that we are here to see whether there is an agreement between the two. On the one hand there is support for demolition, and on the other is objection. A compromise must first be made in order to reach a decision.
- 92) Cllr Blair commented that they have been placed in a very difficult situation. Would like clarification on the residential amenity for future residents as there have been issues raised on this area in the past.
- 93) Directed to the case officer, is the building listed?
No
- 94) The applicant and petitioner referred to the Victorian Society. There needs to be clarity from whom the view will be taken.
The representation is a formal view. It can be demolished if a new building is acceptable.
- 95) Cllr Blencowe commented that the onus rests on the structural survey. Maybe a visit could be useful in order to establish whether the survey is acceptable.
- 96) Cllr Blair commented that a site visit will provide an idea of the context of the area.
- 97) Has the idea gone to the Design and Conservation panel?
No
- 98) Cllr Dixon commented that a visit could be organised to assess whether to approve the proposals. It would be helpful to have an organised visit arranged with an expert.
- 99) Sarah Dyer stated that an organised site visit with officers from the Planning Department could be arranged. She said that if the local planning authority is concerned about the independent structural report carried out by the applicant then it could commission its own structural report or take expert advice.
- 100) Cllr Blencowe stated that an independent structural report is on file at the Council.

Summing Up by the Petitioners – against the application

Ms Taylor made the following points:

- 101) The applicant does not have enough evidence to suggest it must be demolished
102) The proposals contravene the conservationist legislation
103) Magdalene College expressed their interest in restoring the building
104) The 12 proposed flats will be extremely dense for the area

Summing Up by the Applicant

Mr Aldo made the following points:

105) Has always retained the opportunity for people to come in and inspect the building in order to see its irreparable state.

Mr Thompson made the following points:

106) Has been persuaded by the structural engineers report that the building cannot be restored

107) A site visit will allow the irreparable damage to be highlighted

108) The conservationist has accepted the view that the building is not salvageable

109) Have come back with a scheme that has addressed the previous concerns and problems

110) The author of Tom's Midnight Garden lived in Great Shelford.

111) If the author did live in the building, then s106 money would be allocated in order to construct a memorial on the site.

Final Comments of the Chair

112) The DCF has now been closed.

113) The Petitioners may discuss with the applicants the information that was circulated at the beginning of the meeting.

The Meeting concluded at 1.05pm

Chair