

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Notes of a Development Control
Forum

The Jubilee, 73 Catharine Street,
Cambridge

28 October 2009

10.00am – 11.50am

Application No: 09/0836/FUL

Site Address: The Jubilee, 73 Catharine Street, Cambridge

Description: Erection of five dwelling houses and two studio apartments with associated garden space (following demolition of existing Public House).

Applicant: Mr James Arnold

Agent: Frank Shaw Associates Ltd

Lead Petitioner: James Smith

Case Officer: Tony Collins

Present:

For Applicant	For Petitioners
Philip Kratz - Frank Shaw Associates	James Smith
Sarah Jane Pierce – Architect for Frank Shaw Associates	John Coleman
	Tom Colvin

Members of the Planning Committee

Councillors Blencowe and Smart

Other Members in attendance

None

Declarations of Interest by Members

None

Officers

Peter Carter (Principal Development Control Manager - Chair), Tony Collins (Planning Officer) and James Goddard (Committee Manager)

Text of Petition

09/0836/FUL

The current proposal will result in an oppressive, large end-wall close to the boundaries of 60, 62 and 64 Sedgwick Street obscuring the majority of the sky view. It would deprive those houses and gardens, plus those of their immediate neighbours, of the majority of morning and early afternoon sun, especially in the winter months. The houses on Sedgwick Street do not currently get late afternoon/evening sun in their gardens. For Catherine Street the proposal would deprive them of light at the end of the day.

Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the role and purpose of a Development Control Forum. The Chair provided a short summary of the application and went on to stress that this was not a formal meeting and that although notes would be circulated they would be picking up on the main points of the discussion and not be formal minutes.

Case by Applicants

The Applicant's Agent made the following points:

1) The applicant, a local company sought professional advice, and liaised with the Council on how to redevelop 73 Catharine Street. The principles of redevelopment for residential use seemingly being acceptable, a design was developed. The idea was to use a built form sympathetic to the area, with a two-storey terrace with an eaves line consistent with buildings in the locality and rooms in the roof which is already a common occurrence. 5 houses occupy most of the available frontage, but a pair of flats maximise the corner. This would conform with the grain of the immediate locality.

2) The most controversial elements to have been raised appear to be the issues of overlooking and parking.

- Overlooking – spatial standards have become more relaxed over time; efforts have been made to design out overlooking, with success where the worst potential conflicts exist, which should ensure overlooking potential falls within acceptable norms for urban living;
- Parking is always an issue, especially in such a tight-knit area. However a scheme for 14 flats was allowed nearby, on the far side of Mill Road, at appeal, by providing spaces for a car club to locate vehicles demonstrates that there are ways of allowing access to cars without clogging up the streets. This development will include two car parking spaces for Car Club and visitor vehicles, which will be managed by a car club operator.

Case by Petitioners

The Petitioners made the following points:

3) There is no objection to the principle of redevelopment of the site. The objection is to:

- The height, scale and form of what is proposed, which is too big for the area, in order to maximise profit at the expense of others; what is proposed is too tall and deep (its is much taller and is deeper than anything round and about), is too massive, which means it will be overbearing in relationship to the street and to neighbours, and therefore out of keeping and not in proportion in the locality;
- The flawed Design and Access statement - discrepancy between garden space on the ground and dimensions in the Design & Access Statement;
- The adverse impact on established privacy of neighbours;
- The impact on prospective occupiers of having so little amenity space that will be eroded further if proper bike and bin provision is to be made;
- The inadequate parking provision; there is already a problem when people return from work (in the evening). Having more cars in the area will exacerbate the issue of limited parking (and impact on refuse collection) that already exists, particularly at night and weekends;
- General sustainability issues relating to solar gain/solar shading;
- Lifetime Home Standards, such as a lack of wheelchair accessible toilets at entrance level.

4) The Petitioners outlined possible grounds for compromise on the design, by signposting the recently completed redevelopment on the site of the Duke of Argyle pub. They considered this site sympathetic to its neighbours, as it blends in well with the existing buildings, and has on-site parking.

The Case Officer's comments:

5) Plans for the 73 Catharine Street development have been received and circulated to local residents. From this, twenty four responses have been received raising the following concerns:

- Character of area;
- Height, mass and orientation of building;
- Loss of privacy;
- Car parking problems;
- Drainage issues;
- Access issues and security;
- Change of use from business to residential, and associated loss of facilities.

6) Policy consultations have been undertaken with the Highways Agency (which is yet to respond) and the Environment Agency (which raised no concerns).

Members' questions and comments:

7) Clarification was sought concerning the car-sharing scheme, cycle storage facilities, wheelie bin storage and the amount of sunlight available in gardens.

The Agent advised that all occupiers will be obliged to join the Car Club as a condition of occupancy agreement. The two allocated car parking spaces will be clearly designated for Car Club and visitor purposes. The Agent expected the Car Club will be made available as a wider area resident scheme, not just targeted at the new development.

Wheelie bins and required storage area plus general storage sheds have been allocated to each dwelling.

The Lifetime Homes Standard means that homes can be adapted for wheelchair access etc., as required in future. Currently, they are designed for families, but can be modified by residents as required.

The north facing gardens will get little sun in the autumn, which is a common issue for north facing gardens generally.

8) If tenants are tied into a Car Club, what about sub-tenants?

The Agent confirmed that membership will be allocated to properties, regardless of whether owners or sub-tenants are using them. The owner is responsible in either case.

The Chair observed that Car Clubs are one way of addressing parking issues. People can park private cars on the street as well as being car club owners. Enforcement of any schemes will be limited to the provision of two spaces for car parking spaces for use by visitors and Car Club vehicles. The Agent added that although two spaces were allocated, more than two vehicles could use them during a twenty-four hour period through a time-share arrangement. More than two vehicles can be ordered from the Car Club operator at any one time according to demand, and returned to the operator when no longer required. Therefore two spaces should be sufficient for seven households as they are unlikely to need cars at the same time, and would also be available to others in the locality.

The Agent hoped that other Car Clubs in the area will join to together to form a network so that if cars are unavailable in 73 Catharine Street club, they could be requested from another.

9) In reference to text of the petition and Petitioner's points, clarification was sought concerning the impact of building height and roof design, specifically how it conforms to the character of the local area.

The Agent replied that passers-by can only see up to the gutter level, so the roof design (which is taller than others on the locality – currently about 900mm – but will be about 2.2m taller if the submitted scheme is approved) will not be very apparent. This was challenged by the objectors saying the exaggerated height and span would be very apparent to people, especially those approaching from the west, or living to the west in Sedgwick Street. For the applicant, the hipped form at the corner was considered important to help the building 'take the corner' and relate to both streets, while the flat western gable end was seen to be characteristic of most gables in Romsey. The Agent would be happy to accept a condition regarding brickwork treatment of the 'western gable' of the building to make it look more attractive.

The Petitioners clarified their main objections concerned the size and orientation of the development. Parking was important, but a secondary issue.

Summing Up by the Applicant

10) The agent for the applicant explained that his client understood the issues and recognised that the pub was already roughly a metre taller than neighbouring houses and would be taller. While he accepted that the height of the houses could possibly be reduced, he questioned whether there would be real benefits out of a reduction and whether they would remain fit for purpose as family houses. He would report back to his client saying that there would be a need: to reconsider the overall scale - though it was unlikely this would change; to ensure that details of parking and Car Club management issues will be revisited and clarified; and to ensure storage areas for bikes and bins and cars are all properly addressed and more clearly defined on the plans.

Summing Up by the Petitioners

- 11) Reiterated concerns previously raised with regards to:
- Design & Access statement;
 - Development out of keeping with local neighbourhood;
 - Building height and orientation;
 - Management, effectiveness and enforcement of Car Club to ease parking issues.

Final Comments of the Chair

12) The Chair observed the following:

- Issues of massing, scale, elevation and building plans need to be re-examined in terms of their impact - if changes are made then re-consultation will occur;
- Sunlight/daylight projections should be provided for 3 times of day at the equinoxes and at the summer and winter solstice. They should include at least the proposed buildings; the buildings on the south side of St Philip's Road, opposite the site (to show the impact on what is proposed); and the building immediately to the north on the west side of Catherine Street;
- Clarification of bike and bin storage to be produced, to meet Council standards as this will impact on private garden space available to units;
- Clarification of Car Club arrangements and access to the parking spaces to be provided;
- Application to be considered at 17 December 2009 East Area Committee.

The Meeting concluded at 11.50am