

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Notes of a Development Control  
Forum

Clare College, 40-52 Newnham Road,  
Cambridge

25 November 2009

11.00am – 12.00pm

**Application No:** 09/0864/FUL

**Site Address:** Clare College, 40-52 Newnham Road, Cambridge

**Description:** Erection of 20 student residential units to the rear of 40-52 Newnham Road and the alteration and extension of 46-52 Newnham Road to create 14 student residential units (34 in total). Creation of a new vehicular access and car and cycle parking following the demolition of 42-44 Newnham Road, existing garages and other outbuildings and the partial demolition of the rear of 46-52 Newnham Road.

**Applicant:** Clare College

**Agent:** Andy Thompson, Beacon Planning Ltd

**Lead Petitioner:** Pamela Hauser Raspe and Jane Singleton

**Case Officer:** Tony Collins

### Present:

For Applicant	For Petitioners
Donald Hearn – Clare College	Lucy Adrian
Andy Thompson - Beacon Planning Ltd	Robert Gardiner
Simon Tucker – Architect	Jane Singleton

### Members of the Planning Committee

Councillors Al Bander, Baker, Blair, Dixon, Hipkin, and Zmura

### Other Members in attendance

Councillors Cantrill and Smith

### 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**

### **09/0864/FUL**

Whilst in principle we, the local residents, do not object to the redevelopment of this site, we feel the current proposal does not meet the criteria set out in the Cambridge City Council Local Plan 2006 for the following reason:

- Promoting Design Quality – 3/4 Responding to Context
- Have used the characteristics of the locality to help inform the siting, massing, design and materials of the proposed development.

Many of the properties on Newnham Road are three storeys high, but the buildings behind and on the adjoining streets are predominantly one or two storey residential buildings. Their mass is small and their height low. There are no nearby buildings on the north-west side of Newnham Road, which cover as large a ground area or are as high as Clare College's proposed 'Garden Building'

We would like the 'Garden Building' reduced in size and particularly in height. We would be prepared to consider – if no sensible alternatives were available – that the houses and shops fronting Newnham Road be rebuilt to three storeys. In that way the college could get the accommodation they require and the height of the buildings would be graded from three storeys on the street frontage to two storeys or less near the small scale domestic buildings in Malting Lane, Church Rate Walk, Summerfield and the Perse Almshouses. Additionally, as the land slopes towards the street, the site could be dug out and the 'Garden Building' sunk, so it is less obtrusive.

## **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, Agent and Architect made the following points:

- 1) The current buildings are unfit for purpose and the intention is to replace them with more suitable newer housing.
- 2) The redevelopment will reuse a brownfield site.
- 3) In reference to Petitioner's specific points:

- Cambridge Local Plan policy 3.4 - it is positive the local residents do not object in principle to the redevelopment of this site. It is hoped the design is uncontroversial and will lead to positive benefits such as less on-site car parking compared to current usage.
  - Cambridge Local Plan (2006) policy 4.11 – the new building would only have to fit into its surroundings, not duplicate in order to be appropriate.
- 4) The proposed design has been considered and was well thought of by the Design and Conservation Panel.
- 5) A description was given of the proposal:
- Street frontage will be kept in line with Conservation Officer guidance.
  - Design will ensure the building is in keeping with the local area. This also affected the choice of materials.
  - A wide range of stakeholders were consulted to seek views on the design. On-going contact has led to changes to the proposed design to reflect comments received. The aim is for an innovative design on a brownfield site that is sympathetic to its neighbours.
  - A flood risk assessment has been taken into account in the design.

### **Case by Petitioners**

The Petitioners made the following points:

- 6) There is no objection to the principle of redevelopment of the site. The objection (with reference to Cambridge Local Plan) is to:
- The size, mass and materials (including their colouring) proposed for the Garden Building are unsympathetic/inconsistent with the style of local buildings (type of roofing, windows etc).
  - The Garden Building is not a subsidiary building.
  - 3.4 responding to context – query if this is occurring.
  - 4.11 concerning context and successful contrast in a conservation area – query if this is occurring.
  - The Garden Building will overlook/shadow neighbouring buildings in Malting Lane and Church Rate Walk Corner. Garden Building 4.2m higher than other resident's second storey windows.
- 7) The Petitioners outlined possible grounds for compromise, by suggesting a scaled down building of similar design would be more suitable.

### **The Case Officer's comments:**

- 8) Plans for the Clare College development have been received and circulated to local residents. From this, thirty four responses have been received raising the following concerns:
- Principle of development (overdevelopment, loss of shop).

- Character design and appearance (garden building too high, too long, poor design, insufficiently subsidiary. Featureless rear elevation, unsuitable materials, inadequate amenity space. Impact on longer views, fails to respond to context).
  - Loss of privacy, overshadowing, visual domination and noise.
  - Loss of biodiversity through impact on trees.
  - Access issues – delivery, collection and construction noise.
- 9) Policy consultations have been undertaken with:
- Environmental Housing - no objection but conditions recommended concerning noise, contaminated land, waste, construction and air quality.
  - Fire authority queried if access was adequate.
  - English Heritage – design well considered but commented Garden Building was too large and would harm setting of listed buildings. Cedar shingle material usage criticised.
  - Historic Environment Manager – criticised design and materials of garden building and manner of conversion of terrace houses.
  - Landscape Officer – The dominance of parking will inhibit the design.
  - Tree Officer – yew tree loss needs to be justified, conditions recommended for design.
  - Environment Agency – no objection, but recommends conditions
  - Highways Agency – yet to respond.

**Members’ questions and comments:**

10) Clarification was sought concerning the Garden Buildings height.

*The Agent advised that the height was consistent with neighbouring building, just 0.7m higher.*

11) Is the Garden Buildings height/mass as significant as it appears? Is it suitable for its context?

*The Agent answered that height/mass concerns had not been raised by the Design & Conservation Panel or the Conservation Officer.*

12) Clarification was sought concerning results of the Design & Conservation Panel’s ‘traffic light’ ratings.

*Four green and seven amber ratings were returned, but some of the latter were borderline green.*

*Cllr Blair asked for relevant Design & Conservation Panel minutes to be made available when considering future applications at Development Control Forums and Planning Committees. She also observed that the Panel is an advisory body, so applicants should not interpret feedback as formal recommendations.*

13) Residents have expressed concern about the choice of materials, particularly the cedar shingle, specifically how it conforms to the character of the local area. Why is this being used?

*The Agent replied that all building roofs can be seen from neighbouring properties, regardless of the material used. It was acknowledged that cedar shingle usage on the Garden Building made a solid block of colour, so the Architect proposed to provide a rendered drawing for the Case Officer to judge its impact on the neighbourhood. However, cedar shingle was chosen as it was deemed an appropriate colour.*

14) Does the Applicant accept that the Garden Building overshadows Church Rate Corner? If so, do they feel the Garden Building's roof is too dominant on the skyline and out of character with the area, or will other features be added to soften it?

*The Agent replied that windows had been removed from the back of the building to remove the problem of overlooking neighbours.*

15) Clarification was sought concerning the impact of the redevelopment on nearby trees.

*The Agent replied that the yew tree will be removed, and the Applicant has received advice to remove the Ash Tree near the boundary wall. The tree root system on Church Rate Corner will be unaffected.*

16) A pole was put up on the Garden Building site as a height guide. This was not in situ long enough. When will it be available again?

*The Applicant replied that the height guide pole will be provided again in future.*

### **Summing Up by the Applicant**

17) The Applicant commented that the Garden Building was desired as an elegant building for mature students.

### **Summing Up by the Petitioners**

18) Consultation on the design was welcomed.

- 19) No concerns arising from shop frontage or erection of a building on a brownfield site.
- 20) Size/height of the building remains the main concern as it is taller than neighbouring terrace houses.
- 21) Suggested recommendations to move forward:
- Removing the top storey.
  - Using a variety of materials in the design.

**Final Comments of the Chair**

- 22) The Chair observed the following:
- Minutes of the Development Control Forum will be circulated to relevant parties.
  - Application to be considered at a future Planning Committee post Planning Officer discussions.

The Meeting concluded at 12.00pm