

38/08/0492

MR G EDDY

**ERECTION OF 3 STOREY WING TO REPLACE 1960S SOUTH ANNEX. DEMOLITION OF METAL DECK ROOF TO WEST ANNEX AND REPLACEMENT WITH RAISED FLAT ROOF AND ADDITION OF ONE STOREY WITH ADJACENT ROOF TERRACE. MINOR ALTERATIONS TO DOOR AND WINDOW OPENINGS OF MAIN WAREHOUSE FOR USE AS INDIVIDUAL OFFICE STUDIOS AT BARNICOTTS LTD, 112 ST AUGUSTINE STREET, TAUNTON**

Full Planning Permission

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## **PROPOSAL**

It is proposed to convert an existing three storey industrial building into individual office studios including the demolition of single storey flat roof additions and the erection of a mix of one, two and three story extensions that would be used in conjunction with the office space.

1208 square metres of existing building would be converted, 293 square metres of single storey existing building would be demolished and 802 square metres would be provided in the new extensions. This would result in 2010 square metres of B1 business use in the centre of Taunton.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY**

The site is to the east of Somerset County Cricket Club on the corner of Priory Bridge Road and St Augustine Street.

The building is a 3-storey red brick industrial building that was built around 1890 as a Collar Factory. It was closed as a shirt and collar factory in 1964 and taken over by Barnicott's printers before becoming listed in 2004. It is currently in the ownership of Somerset County Cricket Club and the ground floor is now used for storage.

The site is immediately adjacent to the proposed site of the Somerset County Cricket Club Hub Building which was granted planning consent in July 2008.

## **CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES**

### **Consultees**

COUNTY HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY – comment:

“The proposal relates to the construction of a new 3 storey wing to the existing building to replace the existing Annex, whilst the carrying out of minor works within the site.

The proposal will utilise the existing access to the site this will provide an unloading

space for delivery vehicles. From the proposed ground floor plan it is apparent that sufficient room has been provided to allow a small van to turn and leave the site in forward gear. The access provides sufficient visibility in both directions to allow vehicles to exit onto the highway safely. The site provides space for cycle parking; however the application does not show any car parking. This is also not mentioned in the accompanying documentation. Therefore I would require further information to be submitted detailing what car parking will be utilised.

The Proposal is located within the Town Centre as such a reduction in car parking standards would apply. The Local Transport Plan states that due to the sites location a parking reduction of 50% would be considered to be acceptable. Taking into account the above information the Local Highway Authority raises no objection to this proposal and if planning permission were to be granted I would require the following conditions to be attached,

- The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until a fully sheltered cycle rack facility capable of accommodating up to ten cycles has been provided within the site in accordance with a design and specification to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and to be fully implemented to the satisfaction of the said Authority.
- Provision shall be made within the site for the disposal of surface water so as to prevent its discharge onto the highway details of which shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- Before the access is first brought into use a properly consolidated and surfaced turning space for vehicles shall be constructed in accordance with details which shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Such turning space shall be kept clear of obstruction at all times.”

CONSERVATION OFFICER - object

1 General Comments on Written Submission:

- a) Listed Building Appraisal – State of Repair  
As noted earlier in the report, Somerset County Cricket Club bought the premises in 2002 with its listing following in 2004. No apparent maintenance has been undertaken since purchase, therefore its extant state of disrepair is understandable.
- b) Amount, Scale and Layout, Appearance  
In general, references here to ‘eastern’ should read ‘western’.
- c) Involvement and Consultation  
Whilst the list of people / agencies involved in pre-application consultations is cited, it would be informative if the advice obtained was similarly stated. Of significance here is the fact that, as far as I am aware, I was the first point of contact (other than the owner) and from the outset expressed my concern / objection to the proposal to increase the height of the single storey extension on the SW elevation.

## 2 Assessment of Application Proposals on Listed Building:

- a) In accordance with National Guidance (PPG15), the best use for a Listed Building is that for which it was designed, but that, with sensitive adaptation, it can perform a new use which would ensure its maintenance / longevity.
- b) The above said, it is acknowledged that the buildings original use and subsequent last main use as a collar factory, is not viable.
- c) Due to the designed open spaces of the original factory and its associated large windows, it has been appropriately accepted that the compartmentalisation and the requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations, to provide residential accommodation for example, would be wholly inappropriate due to the inherent detrimental impact on the building's character.
- d) The proposed use, and associated partitioning, could be deemed appropriate, provided details of the subdivision of originally designed spaces were sensitively and readily reversible, e.g. clear glazing above 2 metres in partitions and minimal damage to fabric associated with fixings for the same.
- e) The positive aspect of the scheme is the reinstatement of the original windows / openings, which have been inappropriately altered in the past, principally on the north and south elevations.
- f) I have no in-principle objection to the proposed industrial cladding of the extant modern single storey extension on the west elevation and associated 2 storey 'hub' (subject to detail), but consider that such treatment should not be used for the proposed balustrading to the proposed terrace, as such would obscure the current view of the west elevation of the principal building.

## 3 Summary of Observations:

Whilst the proposed use may provide a future use for this Listed Building, I consider that mindful of the comments raised above, I also offer the following primary concerns about the scheme:

- a) The proposed 3-storey extension to the SW elevation not only detrimentally impacts physically and visually on the Listed Building but bears no resemblance to the pattern or ratio of solid to void of the original fenestration.
- b) The proposal to provide a 'sculptured screen' to the original stair wing and associated signage is also considered detrimental to the character of the building, with the former also being incongruous.
- c) Whilst the stated aspirations for the proposed fire escape on the south elevation is noted, I have concerns about the detail, as such could also mask the architectural detailing of the original building and hence have a further detrimental impact.

## 4 Conclusion

As stated above, from the outset I have raised my concerns / objection to the proposed 3 storey extension to the SW elevation and this stands, along with the more detailed observations made in this consultation response. As such I can only raise objection.

PS: Please note that given I have no in-principle objections to certain elements of the scheme, I have not looked in detail at the potential implications of unstated

works such as ventilation, glazing, sound proofing, insulation, new services and the like.

SOMERSET INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY – object:

#### “Historical Significance

The applicant has provided little historical understanding in the *Design and Listed Building Assessment* and the details contained therein have been curiously assembled giving a misleading impression of its significance,

SIAS is intimately acquainted with the former collar factory having successfully promoted the building for listed status in 2003. Our reasons for this are contained in the document *St. Augustine Street Shirt and Collar Factory, Taunton Somerset: A Candidate for Statutory Protection*, a copy of which was deposited with the local planning authority.

One of the telling findings to emerge from the society's research, still relevant at the present time, is that there are only thirteen clothing factories (as distinct from textile mills) listed nationally and most occupy existing textile-related buildings. Shirt and collar manufacturing, which became established in the West Country by the 1870s, accounts for only three listings, all in Somerset, the other two being in Crewkerne. What elevates the Taunton building in both regional and national terms is that it is the only purpose-built collar factory listed, a reflection of the architectural pretensions of Arthur Basil Cottam RIBA (1861 -1911), well known for his portfolio of ecclesiastical and institutional commissions. Therefore such a special building demands more respectful treatment when assuming a new role.

#### The Extensions

Whilst it is to be regretted that the so-called Players' Hub on the County Cricket Ground will compromise the setting of the building, SIAS does not feel that this should lead to its further deterioration by the construction of inappropriate appendages. It should be remembered that in effect these structures are within the curtilage of the listed building and should be viewed accordingly.

Although the single storey remodelling is of a more recent extension, the evidence presented suggests that the over-cladding is at a greater height than the existing with an unsympathetic covering, both of which detract from the appearance of the listed structure.

The three storey extension is, in our considered opinion, even more detrimental in terms of height and scale and makes for a somewhat bizarre architectural statement. SIAS would question whether on economic grounds this element of the design is really necessary. If a case were proven then two differing options could be investigated (i) the use of brick to blend with the factory or (ii) an extension of predominantly glass and steel components which would lend a 21 century compliment to the late 19th century factory.

#### Treatment of the Existing Building

In examining the application further there are other points which raise cause for

concern:

The internal sub-divisions which would not be authentic to the original layout and could threaten the historic fabric.

- The demolition of the chimney which is an early feature.
- Aspects of the design which necessitate new openings into the building, particularly in relation to the fire escape. (Note: there was an earlier escape on the north side installed after 1914 but before 1930).
- The south elevation entrance replacement for another on the east side which seems questionable.
- The lack of a programme for recording features such as the coal store proposed for demolition,
- The choice of grey for the external paint work rather than white unless an historical precedent can be demonstrated.

### Conclusions .

Whether in the detail or in the overall design, these proposals do not, on a subjective level, inspire but more fundamentally there is an apparent lack of understanding in relation to this Grade II former factory. To suggest that the extensions have been “*carefully studied to enhance the setting*” is palpable nonsense since the building would become unbalanced and completely spoilt.

Whilst the present structure is clearly in need of conservation treatment, any scheme should itself be conservation driven to ensure an appropriate outcome deserving listed building consent. Our stance is therefore one of objection.”

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SERVICE – “as far as we are aware there limited or no archaeological implications to this proposal and we therefore have no objections on archaeological grounds.”

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - “support this application”

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – “objects to the proposed development, as submitted, on the following grounds:

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 25 requires the Sequential Test to be demonstrated for proposals other than those that meet the description in footnote 7 of the PPS and Change of Use. Where the proposal is for 'Major' development (such as this) the Environment Agency will object on the lack of evidence of the Sequential Test. The Sequential Test is a requirement of PPS25 and the Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that it has been demonstrated and the Exception Test applied if appropriate too. In each case the Local Planning Authority must have a demonstrable Sequential Test (and Exception Test where appropriate) as part of the planning application. If they do not and they are challenged then this could clearly be an issue for them and could possibly lead to judicial review. Advice on the evidence required to show that the Sequential and Exception Test has been properly applied is set out in the Practice Guide to PPS25 and the Environment Agency's Standing Advice on development and flood risk.

If the above objection is overcome, we will provide you with bespoke comments on

the Flood Risk Assessment within 21 days of receiving formal re-consultation.”

DRAINAGE ENGINEER – “No objections subject to the restrictions listed in the Flood Risk Assessment dated 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008 are made conditions of any approval given.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

One letter of support from the adjoining cricket club has been received which raises the following points:

- The current building is in a poor state of repair.
- The proposed design is exciting but also enhances the period features which attracted listing in the first place
- The new use will be an incubation centre for new businesses.
- It will enhance the economic strength of Taunton.

## **PLANNING POLICIES**

FZ3 - Floodplain Zone 3,  
CAS - County Archeological Site,  
PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment,  
CR1 - TTCAAP - Somerset County Cricket Club,  
S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,  
S2 - TDBCLP - Design,  
EN24 - TDBCLP - Urban Open Space,

## **DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

### Principle of Development

The Collar Factory is located in an area that is well suited to the provision of improved and increased office space that would meet the needs of emerging businesses. Being opposite the Firepool site, which will provide significant amounts of office space, it is anticipated that that pedestrian links to the railway station will be improved. It is considered that the is an appropriate location for this type of development and therefore the main consideration should be the design and impact of the development on the listed building.

### Design and Impact on Listed Building

A number of issues regarding the listed building have been raised by the Conservation Officer and Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society SIAS. Some of these issues can be addressed through the submission of amended plans and a meeting has taken place with the developers and potential amendments have been agreed.

It is accepted that any potential re-use of the building could require internal partitioning and provided that this is sensitively implemented and easily reversible, it would be acceptable.

The proposed sculptured screen to the original stair wing is considered to have an adverse effect on the appearance of the listed building and it has been agreed that this should be removed and a freestanding artwork/entrance feature be provided instead.

It is also considered that the proposed fire escape on the south elevation has been overly designed and it should be possible to provide a simpler escape with a more industrial appearance that would respect the character of the listed industrial building. Amended plans are awaited at the time of writing.

The modern extension to the southern part of the building which would be viewed from the cricket ground and Priory Bridge is acceptable in principle. However the height of the cladding should be reduced so as to allow views of the first and second floor of the end elevation of the industrial building. Amended plans were awaited at the time of writing.

The main area of contention which the Conservation Officer has an objection to in principle, is the three storey extension which has a higher eaves level than the original three storey building. While certain issues (such as the pattern and rhythm of the proposed windows) can be addressed through the submission of amended plans, she maintains her objection with regard to the bulk of this extension.

Therefore, these concerns need to be considered against the potential benefits from the scheme. The building will now have an appropriate re-use which will have some positive impacts on the historic environment as well as a number of potential economic improvements arising from the provision modern office space for new and emerging businesses in an appropriate and highly sustainable location. It is expected that the space provided will suffice for 100 -120 employees and overall a balance has to be struck between the impact of the three storey extension, the re-use of the listed building and the potential economic impact for the town centre.

In overall planning terms, it is considered that this is acceptable subject to the amendments already requested and identified above.

#### Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document

The site is within part of allocation CR1 of the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and therefore the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document also applies. It is expected that new town centre commercial development should contribute towards the Third Way and Northern Inner Distributor Road at a rate of £1.36 per square metre. It is also expected that commercial development contribute towards the Silk Mills Park and Ride Extension at a rate of £1.07 per square metre.

These contributions should only apply to additional floor space to be provided as the existing building already has a commercial use and on the basis that there would be an increase of 509 square metres, this would equate to a contribution of £1236.87 in total.

The contributions should be secured by a Section 106 legal agreement.

#### Flood Risk

The site is located within Flood Zone 3 – High Risk, however the proposed use is classed as less vulnerable. On the basis that PPS25 seeks to direct more vulnerable development away from the higher risk areas, and that this proposal forms part of a town centre regeneration site, it is considered that the Sequential Test has been passed. It is not necessary to apply the exception test, however, the submitted Flood Risk Assessment still needs to be fully considered to ensure that the proposal is safe and will not result in greater flood risk elsewhere.

The further comments of the Environment Agency are awaited with regard to the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and it is expected that they would withdraw their objection should they consider that the proposal is safe.

## **RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)**

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

Subject to the receipt of satisfactory amended plans and the applicant entering into a Section 106 Legal Agreement to secure contributions towards The Third Way and Northern Inner Distributor Road and Silk Mills Park and Ride Extension.

## **RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)**

Time Limit, Cycle Rack Provision, Surface Water Disposal, Access and Turning, Implementation of Flood Risk Assessment. Recommendations, submission of samples of materials/further details.

Notes for compliance

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.**

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