

**ALTERATIONS TO BOUNDARY WALL TO FORM ACCESS SURROUNDING THE PLAYING FIELDS, SOUTH OF FORMER CONVENT AT KINGS COLLEGE, SOUTH ROAD, TAUNTON**

Grid Reference: 323526.123908

Listed Building Consent: Works

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**RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)**

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

It is considered that the proposal is in line with Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy 9 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of proposals relating to listed buildings.

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

1. The works for which consent is hereby granted shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended by S51(4) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

711954-00 Site Location Plan  
711954-01 Existing Site Plan  
711954-02C Proposed Site Plan  
711954-04 Wall Elevations

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. No wall demolition shall commence until a contract had been let for the construction of the residential development to the north.

Reason: To ensure the retention of the listed wall and ensure no loss without the necessary justification.

4. The existing pedestrian opening in the central boundary wall shall be closed

up in stone to match as indicated on the submitted plan prior to occupation of any dwelling.

Reason: In order to ensure details appropriate to the character of the listed building in accordance with policy S2 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

Notes for compliance

1. You are advised that a separate application for planning permission is required before any works commence.

## **PROPOSAL**

The proposal is to remove a 6m section of wall within the site at the former convent site at Kings College to allow for vehicular access to a proposed housing site. An existing pedestrian access point 1m wide would be closed.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY**

The application site lies to the west of South Road and consists of land to the south of the former convent site, a Grade II\* listed building. The site lies within the conservation area and consists of two fields, the Nun's Field and the Nursery Field. These are separated by a listed stone wall varying in height from 4m at the eastern end to 2.5m at the western end.

A previous application for Formation of and alterations to openings in stonewall around grounds of playing fields, Kings College, South Road, Taunton was submitted in December 2010 reference 38/10/0436LB and was withdrawn in March 2011.

## **CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES**

### **Consultees**

*SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP* - This application has been submitted in relation to application number 38/12/0234. In particular, this application appears to be for listed building consent for the removal of part of the wall in order to gain access to the application site.

The proposed point of access is considered to be acceptable in terms of visibility onto South Road. On this basis there is no objection from the Highway Authority, however the Applicant should note the following:

The alteration of the access and/or minor works will involve construction works within the existing highway limits. These works must be agreed in advance with the Highway Service Manager for the Taunton Area at Burton Place, Taunton, TA1 4DY. Tel No 0845 345 9155, He will be able to advise upon and issue/provide the relevant licences, necessary under the Highways Act 1980.

*HERITAGE LEAD* - The current proposals have appropriately addressed concerns

expressed by a variety of interested parties, resulting in a scheme which is much improved in terms of layout. Whilst I would have favoured a contemporary design approach (as originally advanced), I can understand why the views of local people have influenced the more traditional approach.

From a heritage asset perspective, a particular improvement is the fact that the Listed boundary wall will be wholly in the public realm, with its appropriate repair and maintenance, being the responsibility of a management company. In this way, the potential for ad hoc repairs of varying quality, by individual owners will be negated and the integrity/ original purpose of the wall ie the enclosure of Nun's Field will be maintained.

Whilst clearly the development will change the character of Nun's Field, in the context of the character of the Conservation Area as a whole, I consider it reasonable to judge the impact as modest/neutral.

Whilst the setting of the former Convent and the setting of the Listed boundary wall will change, existing important public views of the main building will be retained and as noted above, the integrity of the boundary will be maintained and its former purpose, readily perceived.

On balance, I therefore support both applications.

*ENGLISH HERITAGE (HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND)* - We do not wish to comment in detail but would offer the following general observations.

We have maintained that the principle of development on this site might be acceptable subject to more consideration of the context of the conservation area and the impact on the setting of the Grade II\* Convent and views from South Road of its clock tower. In particular we were concerned about the development on the open land known as Nursery Field. In our opinion this important open space, historically associated with the Convent, should be preserved as a significant amenity and recreational space within the context of the Conservation Area and setting to the Convent. We therefore welcome this latest proposal to retain and preserve the Nursery Field as recreational space.

Another positive aspect of this proposal is the demolition of the sports hall that has had a detrimental impact on the setting of the Convent for some time. Its replacement with a well considered low-key development of this form, working within the space created by the walled garden and respecting the character of the site, should be an enhancement to the heritage assets in the vicinity.

There have been some significant improvements in the scheme that we noted in the pre-application submission. As a result the major change we can now positively support is the retention of the Nursery Field for recreational activity by restricting the residential development to the walled garden area of the site. However there are still some issues that in our opinion need to be reconsidered.

We previously indicated that we were unhappy about the access off South Road and the impact of the opening in the wall at this point. We understand that there is little alternative but to create an access road through the wall off South Road, through Nursery Field and through part of the listed wall into Nun's Field. Wessex

Archaeology's Heritage Assessment report has assessed the varying degrees of significance of the walls within the site and highlighted where previous alterations have been made in order to inform where the proposed opening should be located to reduce destruction of historic fabric to a minimum. We would however ask that more consideration is given to the reduction in height of this boundary wall running along the east of Nursery Field. Whilst we understand the height reduction will allow greater surveillance the loss in height is, in our opinion, contrary to the character of the conservation area and therefore harmful to its character and appearance. We would advocate its retention at the same height as existing but would suggest the introduction of slots within the wall fabric for the public to view the space in use.

Care needs to be taken over the choice of surface treatments to the entrance way and road in order to soften the impact of this new feature within the conservation area and control the potential suburban character that could be introduced if an inappropriate choice of material is made. The introduction of a formal area for a car park in the field is regrettable. Again the choice of surface treatments could help mitigate the impact of this area.

We would also wish to see a robust conservation management plan for the walls drawn up to ensure that they are appropriately repaired and maintained into the future for the benefit of all residents and the setting to the Convent and other heritage assets.

Finally we were previously concerned to ensure the design of the residential units reflected the typical characteristics associated with this conservation area. We also believe that more care and attention has been made to the quality of the scale and design of the residential units that are proposed especially in terms of the roofscape that will be visible within the conservation area. We would however advocate the use of conditions to control materials and construction details to ensure that the quality of the design is maintained in the implementation of the scheme.

Recommendation - We would urge you to address the above issues and recommend that the application be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.

## **Representations**

1 letter of support

6 letters of objection:

- Any work creating irreversible modification requires adequate and suitable justification based on need and benefit and needs to be considered with planning application 38/12/0234 without which it is unnecessary.
- It is counter to the heritage aspects of South Road, ruins a listed feature and lead to significant road traffic safety and congestion concerns.
- The wall is listed and should remain as it is.
- No building should take place.
- Making a new entrance would create a staggered cross roads.

## **PLANNING POLICIES**

## **DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

The proposal is for alterations to the listed walls and the Authority has to consider the proposal in accordance with Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires that in considering whether to grant listed building consent, the Local Planning Authority “shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”. Access and traffic considerations are not therefore relevant.

The wall that is listed to be altered is not the frontage wall to South Road but the internal wall running east-west across the site. The proposal provides for the removal of a 6m section of wall to allow for access to the Nun's Field to the north for provision of housing and demolition of the gymnasium building. An existing 1m pedestrian access will be blocked up. The Heritage Assessment has identified the area for the access to minimise the loss of historic fabric and English Heritage has supported the approach to the development. If the proposal for residential development is granted there is considered to be sufficient justification for the removal of the small section of wall proposed and the development is therefore considered acceptable and not to cause significant harm to the listed building subject to conditions to secure closure of the existing pedestrian opening and no commencement until a signed contract for residential development is completed.

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.**

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