

38/2008/056

GADD HOMES

**ERECTION OF THREE-STOREY BUILDING OF 11 TWO BEDROOM APARTMENTS ON SITE OF DWELLING TO BE DEMOLISHED AT 49, WORDSWORTH DRIVE, TAUNTON AS AMENDED BY AGENT'S LETTER DATED 24APRIL 2008 AND REVISED PLANS, DRAWINGS NOS.. A 2007 204 PL001 REV C, PL005 REV.A AND PL006**

323975/124450

FULL

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## **PROPOSAL**

The site abuts the eastern side of Wordsworth Drive and is currently occupied by a 2-storey house set in a large curtilage. The house is set back some 30 metres from the road with a rear garden of some 20 metres. The site has an area of approximately 0.33 acres (applicant's figure).

Around the site is residential development in various forms, with semi-detached pairs of 2-storey dwellings fronting Wordsworth Drive to the west, and 2-storey blocks of flats to the north and south. There is a factory car park to the east and a small children's play space immediately north of the site which is accessed by a footpath running along the northern boundary to the site.

The proposed block of flats is located in the centre of the site in a similar position to the existing house, but also extending on to the rear part of the site to some 7.5 metres from the rear boundary. The block will be 15.2 metres wide at the front and 12 metres at the rear, with a depth of 22 metres. It has 3 floors of flats and is 9.3m to the ridge (6.8 metres to the eaves) on the front part and 9.2m to the ridge (5.3m to the eaves) on the rear part. Materials will be red facing brick, buff facing brick with a breckland brown double roman roof tile.

There will be 11 parking spaces in front of the block of flats (1 for each flat), and a cycle store and bin store located in the centre of the site in front of the south boundary.

There is a 2.5m high privet hedge inside the north, east and part south boundaries, and a 9m high conifer hedge inside part of the south boundary of the site.

A previous similar scheme for 12 flats was withdrawn in January 2008. The agent states that the current scheme reduces the number of apartments from four to three at second floor level. The height at the front of the development has been reduced to 2.5 storeys with the single apartment at the rear being contained wholly within the roof space. The ridge height of the existing house is 26.490 AOD, 8.430m above ground level. The ridge height of the current proposals, at its highest point is 27.368AOD, 9.368m above ground level which is less than 1 metre higher than the existing house. The current proposals are substantially lower than the ridge height of the previous application at 29.164 AOD. The agent also believes that the revised

application satisfactorily addresses the issue of privacy. The dwellings to the south are fully screened by existing trees which, at a height of 9m are substantially higher than the eye level from the second floor windows of approximately 7.2m. The privacy of the houses on Wordsworth Drive has been protected by omitting the windows to the west elevation at second floor level (NOTE - There are kitchen windows to 2 flats and a window to the staircase at second floor level in the west elevation, but these will be roof lights.) The closest windows to these properties at first floor level are at a minimum distance of 23m.

## **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

**LANDSCAPE OFFICER** - Given the height of the proposed building, it is important to provide tree planting around the perimeter of the site to help soften the mass of the new building.

**HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSIONS OFFICER** - A footway from Wordsworth Drive to a children's play area is adjacent to the proposed development site. This is the property of TDBC . With the nature of the proposed work it is recommended that either extreme health and safety measures are put in place or a temporary stopping up decision is taken.

**COUNTY HIGHWAY OFFICER** - The site is located within the development limits of Taunton, which is designated as a town under Structure Plan Policy STR2(Towns). The proposal will be in close proximity to public transport network, whilst offering access to the cycle network. However, it does not provide safe access to the highway or safe access for pedestrians entering the site. Therefore the proposal only partially accords with Structure Plan Policy 49 (Transport Requirements of New Development). In terms of the Local Plan the proposal accords with the Local Plan S1 (General Requirements) as although the proposal will increase the amount of traffic using Wordsworth Drive it is an acceptable amount as the road is designated as a distributor road and as such the amount of traffic generated will not have a significant effect on the highway. In terms of parking the proposal will offer parking in the ratio of one space per flat. This is in accordance with the Somerset Local Plan 2006-2011 Appendix 8 Parking Strategy.

16 LETTERS OF OBJECTION - have been received relating to the following:

1. Proposal is unsuitably located and of a size very much out of proportion with the surrounding development and out of character with the area which contains family sized houses. The roofline is still far too high thus towering above any other properties in this area.
2. It would create new development to the rear of the site. At 3 storeys high, just 15 metres from the adjacent flats, it would overshadow existing flats cause loss of light and darken the kitchens on the ground floor.
3. Overlooking/Loss of privacy. Windows facing existing flats at approximately 15 m. Overlooking rear gardens of houses in Wordsworth Drive
4. Loss of amenity in rear garden, with additional noise levels and surrounding mature trees destroyed.

5. Loss of light. The proposed building at approximately 9.4 metres high will cast a shadow over the rear of the property, blocking out sunlight and light from the garden and the rear of the dwelling.
6. Increase of noise from increased occupancy. The proximity of the property and the increase in the number of persons living there will cause a significant increase in noise levels. Increase in noise from use of the bin store near to dwelling.
7. Over-development of the site.
8. The road access cannot cope with the extra traffic going to and from the site as cars park close to the dropped kerb most of the time especially after work, and it seems to be a short cut for large lorries, making this an accident waiting to happen.
9. Increase in pollution from additional vehicles - will increase the levels of poisonous exhaust fumes/gases and other pollutants.
10. Local wildlife will have nowhere to go and will lose their natural habitat.
11. No mention of any alterations to the water supply. This will probably make the pressure even lower.
12. Plans do not give a clear understanding of what would happen to the hedges that are currently on the northern boundary of the site. These hedges give a lot of privacy.
13. Proposed refuse store will mean that 3 large commercial sized bins or 11 wheely bins will be placed on the pavement fortnightly, blocking the pavement for pedestrians.
14. There will be a car parking issue as the flats only have one off road space per 2-bedroom flat.
15. Visibility splay is very short for the 30 m.p.h. road.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

RPG10

Somerset & Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review

STR1, STR4 and Policy 49

Taunton Deane Local Plan - Policies S1, S2 , C4, M4 and EN4. 49.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The site is located in an area where residential development, in principle would be acceptable. The main issue is the relationship between the proposed block of flats and the existing development adjacent to the site.

There are existing 2-storey blocks of flats to both the north and south of the rear part of the site (Russet Drive and Parmin Way respectively) and 2-storey detached dwellings to the front (west) of the site fronting Wordsworth Drive. To the north of the centre part of the site is a children's playground.

The flats have communal open space around them rather than individual gardens and the distance to the flats to the north is over 25 metres (building to building). Windows on the north elevation of the proposed building at first floor level are to 4 bedrooms and 2 kitchens, and at second floor level are to 3 bedrooms and 1 living room. With regard to the block of flats to the south, there is a distance of 16 metres between the existing and the proposed, and along part of the southern boundary there is a row of 9m high conifer trees along three quarters of the boundary which

will provide satisfactory screening. At the eastern end of this boundary for some 10 metres, there are low shrubs between the blocks, but the windows in the proposed block serve 2 bedrooms and a kitchen at first floor level, and only 1 bedroom window at second floor level. These distances are considered to be acceptable.

The front of the proposed block will face towards the rear of the 2-storey pairs of houses on Wordsworth Drive. The relationship with no.47 Wordsworth Drive will be at an angle with some 20 metres building to building, but the block of flats will be partly directly behind no.51 Wordsworth Drive. Building to building, the distance scales 23 metres on the plan, and the block will be 10.8m from the rear boundary of No. 51. Second floor windows have been omitted on this elevation and replaced with rooflights, and the applicant has submitted photographs taken from an existing first floor bedroom window, and sections showing existing and proposed eye line sights which indicate that from the first floor the line of sight into the rear garden will be screened by an existing laurel hedge in the site.

Parking provision is shown at one space per flat and the plan has been amended to show the parking area away from the rear boundary of 51, Wordsworth Drive. Cycle and bin store provision is shown in the area to the rear of 51, Wordsworth Drive, but these will be enclosed in a timber enclosure.

Whilst the proposed block is different to the existing detached house on the site, a block of flats is not out of keeping in this area. Since an earlier scheme for a similar block of 12 flats was withdrawn, the roof height of the block has been reduced, one flat has been omitted and dormer windows proposed in the roof, second floor windows on the west elevation have been replaced by rooflights, and the parking areas and cycle and bin store have been relocated.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission is GRANTED - Subject to conditions relating to time limit, wildlife, landscaping, drainage, contributions to children's play areas and recreation areas, parking areas, cycle rack/ bin storage provision, access, and visibility.

## **REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:-**

It is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development which will not give rise to any unacceptable visual or neighbour impact and it is therefore in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2 and M 4

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

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356454 MRS H PULSFORD (MON/TUE/WED)**

## **NOTES:**

1. All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981( as amended) and if discovered should not be disturbed. It should be noted that the protection afforded to species under UK and EU legislation is

irrespective of the planning system and the applicant should ensure that any activity they undertake on the application site (regardless of the need for planning consent) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.

2. As a few bats may be found within any building at any time of year, all contractors should be made aware, in writing, that bats may be found in door lintels, within wall cavities, under roof tiles/slates and cladding etc. If bats are found during building work, all work in the proximity of the bats should stop immediately. Further advice should be sought from Natural England via Batline 0845 1300 228. Bats should not be handled, but should be left in situ, gently covered until advice is obtained. In emergency situations bats should only be handled with gloves.
3. The alteration of the access will involve construction works within the existing highway limits. These works must be agreed in advance with the Highway Services Manager at Somerset Highways Burton Place, Taunton (08453459155). He will be able to advise upon and issue/provide the relevant licenses necessary under the Highway Act 1980 (Section 184).
4. There is a footway from Wordsworth Drive to a children's play area which is adjacent to the site. This is the property of Taunton Deane Borough Council. With the nature of the work proposed, it is recommended that either extreme health and safety measures are put in place or a temporary stopping up decision is taken.