

38/2005/227

SUMMERFIELD DEVELOPMENTS (SW) LTD

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 24 ONE BEDROOMED FLATS ON SITE OF DWELLING TO BE DEMOLISHED AT 5-7 COMPASS HILL TAUNTON.

22248/24281

OUTLINE APPLICATION

PROPOSAL

Residential Development of 24 One Bedroomed Flats on Site of Dwellings to be Demolished at 5-7 Compass Hill, Taunton. The site currently consists of two semi-detached two storey properties in brick with hipped slate roofs. The site lies north of the Park Street Conservation Area and given the flats development to the north of the site, it is considered suitable by the applicant for a high density residential development to maximise the potential of the site in line with government guidelines for the redevelopment of brownfield sites. The design is guided by the site which is on the one-way gyratory system where it is not feasible to provide a safe vehicular access. There is 3 storey development in the area, including Dovetail Court, and the Design Statement considers it appropriate for the new development to be three storey to maximise potential.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY have no objection in principle to the proposed development. In detail highway issues regarding this site are extremely sensitive as Compass Hill is a very busy section of the A38 running one-way downhill with a heavy traffic flow and lots of crossing movements. Consequently a development here which gained vehicular access to the onto Compass Hill would create significant highway safety hazards. I am therefore pleased to see that the redevelopment of this site does not afford vehicular access. It is therefore acceptable. Compass Hill at this point narrows and it would be beneficial for a minor road widening to take place, generally in accordance with the enclosed drawing. This sets back the carriageway edge a maximum of 1.5m and will allow for additional manoeuvring space and lane width through the narrowest area. the construction of dwellings on this site will also be a complicated issue and traffic management must be undertaken with immense care. The developer will therefore be required to enter into a Section 278 or 106 Agreement with the Highway Authority to ensure the design construction and funding of the road widening and replacement of the roadside footway, together with agreeing a programme of works both for the highway alterations and the construction of the development on site insofar as that affects the public highway. It is necessary for the applicant to show the development meets the Accessibility criteria as laid out in RPG10. Furthermore on the initial plans no detail of bin storage or pedestrian visibility splays are detailed. In the event of permission being granted I would recommend conditions re bin storage and pedestrian visibility. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST as far as we are aware there are limited or no archaeological implications to this proposal and we therefore have no objections. WESSEX WATER there is sufficient spare capacity to serve this site and connection may be made to the combined sewer in Compass Hill. The sewerage

system is combined in this area. Surface water may be discharged to the same sewer as the foul connection but the applicant is asked to investigate using the soakaways or other Sustainable Drainage solutions to keep the volume and rate of discharge to a minimum. Flow calculations will be required. In line with Government protocol the applicant is advised to contact Developers Services to see if any drainage systems can be adopted under a Section 104 Agreement. CIVIC SOCIETY welcomes the development of any starter, affordable or small-scale accommodation in the town centre. We accept that housing densities in the country have generally been very low and that much higher densities are desirable. On this site which is a traffic island, and one of the busiest in Taunton, we feel the proposal would result in an unacceptable over-development. Our principle objection is the lack of provision for access and servicing. How are residents to take deliveries of large goods, etc? How is waste to be collected in the context of more complex recycling procedures now being introduced? (We also doubt there is adequate space for the large number of bins and containers entailed in the new recycling process). Our second objection is that it is unrealistic to expect 24 small households to require no parking spaces. Quite apart from the very real needs of people to own their own transport, exacerbated by the poor public transport within Taunton and Somerset generally, what are visitors and tradespeople calling to do? The lack of any off-road parking/servicing space must create a potential for traffic problems and accidents in an already congested and accident prone area. We would also note that there is no current safe pedestrian access for anyone living on Compass Hill. Adding 20 to 40 or so more residents just increases the probability of casualties. A more modest proposal with adequate servicing space might be supportable, although it causes the loss of two pleasant houses. From an aesthetic point of view we consider the arrangement of blocks on this confined site unsightly. It might be argued that since buildings with few architectural merits such as Dovetail Court (which fortunately is virtually invisible from the street) have already been erected on Compass Hill that the appearance does not matter, but these blocks standing well towards the higher end of the slope will be very visible. There will be considerable visual impact from the circulating road, the Trull Road, the flats opposite and for the residents of the upper end of Cann Street.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the site is locally prominent and the trees on it make a valuable contribution to the local street scene, however because of structural (tree) problems none are of sufficient amenity value to warrant a TPO. The proposals provide limited opportunity for landscape mitigation and given the local importance of the site my view is the site is being overdeveloped. There should be scope for a good quality street frontage with wall, railings and shrub and tree planting, as well as tree planting at the rear of the site to soften the impact from neighbouring properties. RIGHTS OF WAY OFFICER no observations. PLANNING POLICY as a site in central Taunton that is currently in residential use and is surrounded by other residential properties the proposal is acceptable in principle. Two significant policy issues in relation to the proposal are affordable housing and parking. On the first of these, the proposal falls just below the current site size threshold of 25 at which affordable housing will be sought. In view of the extremely high density proposed and only achieved through the inclusion of one-bedroomed dwellings it is reasonable to accept that the site is not capable of accommodating 25 or more units. The Government has consulted on a proposal to reduce the threshold to 15 dwellings and the Council has decided that if this change is confirmed by the Government it will be implemented with immediate effect. If the threshold is reduced an element of affordable housing should then be sought from the

site. The developer should be advised that this will be the case if the threshold changes before the application is determined. As far as the issue of parking is concerned the principle of a car free development in this location would appear to be appropriate, and may even be a pre-requisite in view of the conditions on the adjoining highway at peak times. LEISURE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER a contribution towards local recreational facilities in line with Local Plan policy should be sought. HOUSING OFFICER there is a proven need in the area but unfortunately the provision of 24 falls below the present affordable housing 'trigger' level.

9 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- overpowering and too close to Dovetail Court; overlooking; loss of privacy and natural light; loss of view; increase in noise; loss of trees; Council advice note support their retention; trees help alleviate pollution and reduce high volume of noise; three storey high blocks here would dominate the skyline unless properly screened and two storey would be more appropriate; it will affect drainage of foul and surface water; lack of parking; no plan for landscaping; query disabled access; dangerous development on main road; development is too big and will destroy attractive family homes; 24 flats is inappropriate; vehicle setting down and picking up would be dangerous; problem of servicing and visitor access; increase in parking in surrounding area; appearance on Compass Hill will be significant as will the impact on Cann Street with 3 storey flats closer than the houses; remaining gardens are important 'green lungs' and sanctuaries for wildlife; it is unrealistic to suppose purchasers will not have cars.

POLICY CONTEXT

RPG10 Regional Planning Guidance for the South West.

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR1 Sustainable Development, STR4 Development in Towns, POLICY 9 The Built Historic Environment, POLICY 33 Provision For Housing, POLICY 37 Facilities for Sport and Recreation, POLICY 39 Transport and Development, POLICY 48 Access and Parking, POLICY 49 Transport Requirements of New Developments.

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 General Requirements, S2 Design, H2 Housing within Classified Settlements, H4 Self-contained Accommodation, M4 Residential Parking Requirements, M5 Cycling Provision, C4 Standards of Sport and Recreation Provision, EN6 Protection of Trees, Woodlands, Orchards and Hedgerows, EN8 Trees in and Around Settlements, EN14 Conservation Areas, T33 Taunton Skyline.

ASSESSMENT

The proposal is for the redevelopment of an existing housing site to provide 24 one-bedroomed flats on 0.1075 ha currently occupied by two dwellings. The main

considerations are the design and suitability of the site, landscape impact and access for servicing provision.

The site lies within the central area of Taunton and is considered suitable in terms of a car free development. This view is supported by the Highway Authority given that the site lies off the one way system where access for vehicles would be dangerous where there are 3 lanes of merging traffic. Hence the proposal is for one bedroomed units in 3 storey form within the site without any parking. There are other examples of three storey development in the adjacent area and the provision of three storey blocks on this site are not considered to be out of character. The precise design and layout of the blocks is reserved for subsequent approval, however subject to the detailed design to avoid direct overlooking and levels details, the principle of three storey development here is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with policy S2 and not to detrimentally affect the skyline.

There are a number of trees within the existing site and these have been assessed by the Council's Landscape Officer. None are considered worthy of a TPO, however it is considered that replacement planting should be provided to mitigate the loss in line with policies EN6 and EN8 and it is considered that this can be achieved on site and can be conditioned into any reserved matters application.

There has been a request from the Highway Authority that a strip of land across the site frontage be incorporated into highway width improvements. The applicants are agreeable to this and it is still considered possible to design a development with defensible space and planting on the frontage. The site proposal has no access other than a pedestrian one and this is not unlike other developments in the adjacent Park Street. Adequate bin and cycle store provision will be required and be subject to conditions. A means of providing a servicing bay on the road frontage is being investigated, however such provision cannot be provided for within the site in addition to the road widening scheme as this would fatally compromise the scheme proposed. The provision of a layby within the frontage is currently being considered in safety terms by the Highway Authority.

In summary the site is a suitable one for car free development within the town centre. The provision of 3 storey development here is considered to be in keeping with the character of the area and subject to detailed design would not adversely affect the amenity of neighbours or the visual amenity of the street scene. The site is an urban one and the provision of landscaping to mitigate the loss of trees is considered acceptable. The initial lack of service layby on the frontage is not considered sufficient in itself to warrant refusal of the application given that there are other premises in the area that do not have such a facility. The application is considered a high density urban development in line with government guidance for the reuse of brownfield sites and is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the applicants entering into a Section 106 Agreement to provide a Sport and recreation contribution the Development Control Manager in consultation with the

Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, reserved matters, drainage, levels, materials, sample brick panel, window details, landscaping, tree retention, tree protection, boundary treatment, no occupation until road widening scheme carried out, bin stores, cycle parking, combined aerial, meter boxes. Notes re design, Wessex Water connection

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:-The proposal is considered to comply with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2, H2, H4, M4 and C4 and material considerations do not indicate otherwise.

If the Section 106 is not signed by 22nd August, 2005 the Development Control Manager be authorised to REFUSE permission as contrary to Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy C4.

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

CONTACT OFFICER: 2456 MR G CLIFFORD

NOTES: