

38/2006/031CA

STRONGVOX LTD

**DEMOLITION OF NON-LISTED BUILDINGS AT FORMER SCAT ANNEXE,
STAPLEGROVE ROAD, TAUNTON**

22132/25157

BUILDING DEMOLITION

PROPOSAL

The site lies within the Staplegrove Road Conservation Area. This proposal is for the demolition of the former SCAT annexe building (fronting onto Staplegrove Road), 2 temporary classrooms (adjacent to Linden Grove), 2 concrete block and asbestos sheet classrooms (lying to the rear of the main SCAT building), a timber storage shed (positioned to the South of the SCAT annexe) and a concrete panel garage.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY views awaited. COUNTY EDUCATION the development will result in the need for 6 primary spaces and 3 secondary spaces. There are a number of surplus spaces in the local secondary school but no available space in the two local primary schools. Contributions should be sought for this provision. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST views awaited. ENGLISH HERITAGE objection raised, the existing building is considered to have a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation area and the proposed replacement building is considered to be of a lesser quality.

CONSERVATION OFFICER Brief History 1890: Bishop Fox's School for girls transferred to the premises of the former Roman Catholic Church on The Crescent (now Masonic Hall). 1895: Scheme proposed for the relocation of Bishop Fox's and construction of a Girls' Grammar School on a site along Staplegrove Road in the Parish of Taunton St James, known as Laurel's Nurseries. Move to be made possible with funding from the education authority (recently formed Somerset County Council) and accumulated funds from the school's endowment. 1900: Bishop Fox's transferred to the County Council which allowed the governors to apply to the County Council's Board of Education for funding for the relocation to the Laurel's Nurseries site. 1904: New school buildings erected and officially opened by Henry Hobhouse MP in 1905. 1907: Main buildings considerable enlarged with new wing, and included. Ground Floor: a) Main hall that could be separated into 3 classrooms by partitions and used at the time of 1934 as one classroom and the other two-thirds as a gymnasium, with the full hall used each morning for assembly. b) Domestic science room to left rear, used for the instruction of cookery and laundry, but its use impaired by it also being used as the kitchens and dinning for school dinners. c) Two other classrooms d) Cloakrooms e) Head and assistant mistresses' rooms. First Floor: f) Art room, above the domestic science room, with large windows facing north, g) Classroom, h) Upper science lab, i) Staff room. In the ground were: j) Model gardens, k) Lawn tennis and basketball courts, l) Playing fields. By 1934 the school was operating from the main school site and Weir Lodge over the road. The

adjoining house of The Laurels was also the headmistress's residence and housed boarders and some mistresses. 1940: Relocation from Staplegrove Road to new site on Kingston Road. The Architects The main school building was designed by the prominent Taunton practise of Cottam and Samson Architects. The partners were Charles Henry Samson (1837-1925) and Arthur Basil Cottam (1861 or 2-1911). Charles Samson worked for the Luttrell Estate between 1868-78 and a number of solid and competent buildings in Minehead are attributed to him. These were important factors in the recent review of the Minehead conservation areas. He started his independent practise in Taunton in 1878. The Bishop Fox's building may have been one of the last buildings the practise was involved with before his retirement circa 1906. Arthur Cottam moved to Taunton sometime after 1881 and appears to have been the junior partner to Samson. The practise was also responsible for the Art College on Corporation Street (Grade II) of 1905. This being of a similar date but in a neo-classical style fitting its civic location. More research is required into the work of these architects, in particular into their major works and education buildings.

Architectural Importance of the Former Technical College Annex. The new school was built in the light, highly decorative Edwardian style of the time. It is a good example of this style with a facade of neo-classical features broken-up and mixed with vernacular revival detailing influenced by the Queen Anne revival and Arts and Crafts styles. The Technical College Annex has the classical features of the cupola, Venetian windows, open-bed pediments to the gable eaves, and stone open-bed segmental arches to ground floor windows, which are harmoniously mixed with, and softened by, the domestic vernacular detailing of numerous and generous gables with steeply pitched roofs, gable dormers, deep bracketed eaves, door canopy, extensive use of painted timber and the soft red brick and plain tiles. The other big influence was the cost of materials, and the Technical College Annex reflects this with the use of brick and stucco and the large and numerous windows made possible by the falling cost of plate glass. The Edwardian period saw an explosion in the amount and variety of decorative detailing, but this coincided with a fashion for constraint. In competent hands this led to a pleasing architectural composition that was strong but domestic, highly decorative but controlled - ideal for a new girl's school buildings located on the outer suburb of the town. The former Technical College Annex is a building of architectural merit in its own right that should be retained for these qualities and as the work of a prominent local architectural practise. In the context of the conservation area, this building is very much part of the charming Staplegrove Road Conservation Area. This area was largely developed from the mid 19th century to the start of the First World War (please see enclosed sketch map) and has remained remarkable intact. The buildings reflect the period in which this part of Taunton was developed and document the stylistic changes through a rich period in British architecture. This gives the area a strong character and integrity. The former Technical College Annex is a critical element in this and its loss would be detrimental to the character, appearance and integrity of the Conservation Area. The building is also of local historical interest having being built for the Taunton girl's grammar school. With reference to the recent guidance on conservation area appraisals and for the reasons stated above, this building should be considered as a building of strong 'townscape merit' or 'building of local interest' (important unlisted building). For more guidance on this please see the English Heritage 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals', 2005. The former Technical College Annex is also a prominent building that makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of one of the

town's main approach roads. Sources Chipchase, N. Taunton In Old Photograph. Alan Sulton Publishing, Gloucester 1989 Felstead, A. Directory of British Architects 1834-190. 1993. Hockman, H. Edwardian House Style. David and Charles 2001. Example of this style with a facade of neo-classical features broken-up and mixed with vernacular revival detailing influenced by the Queen Anne revival and Arts and Crafts styles. The Technical College Annex has the classical features of the cupola, Venetian windows, open-bed pediments to the gable eaves, and stone open-bed segmental arches to ground floor windows, which are harmoniously mixed with, and softened by, the domestic vernacular detailing of numerous and generous gables with steeply pitched roofs, gable dormers, deep bracketed eaves, door canopy, extensive use of painted timber and the soft red brick and plain tiles. The other big influence was the cost of materials, and the Technical College Annex reflects this with the use of brick and stucco and the large and numerous windows made possible by the falling cost of plate glass. The Edwardian period saw an explosion in the amount and variety of decorative detailing, but this coincided with a fashion for constraint. In competent hands this led to a pleasing architectural composition that was strong but domestic, highly decorative but controlled - ideal for a new girl's school buildings located on the outer suburb of the town. The former Technical College Annex is a building of architectural merit in its own right that should be retained for these qualities and as the work of a prominent local architectural practise. In the context of the conservation area, this building is very much part of the charming Staplegrove Road Conservation Area. This area was largely developed from the mid 19th century to the start of the First World War (please see enclosed sketch map) and has remained remarkable intact. The buildings reflect the period in which this part of Taunton was developed and document the stylistic changes through a rich period in British architecture. This gives the area a strong character and integrity. The former Technical College Annex is a critical element in this and its loss would be detrimental to the character, appearance and integrity of the Conservation Area. The building is also of local historical interest having being built for the Taunton girl's grammar school. With reference to the recent guidance on conservation area appraisals and for the reasons stated above, this building should be considered as a building of strong 'townscape merit' or 'building of local interest' (important unlisted building). For more guidance on this please see the English Heritage 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals', 2005. The former Technical College Annex is also a prominent building that makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of one of the town's main approach roads. Sources Chipchase, N. Taunton In Old Photograph. Alan Sulton Publishing, Gloucester 1989 Felstead, A. Directory of British Architects 1834-190. 1993. Hockman, H. Edwardian House Style. David and Charles 2001. Long, H. The Edwardian House. Manchester University Press 1993. Mason, S. The history of Bishop Fox's School. 1985 Mason, S. Memories of Bishop Fox's School 1908-1990 1840 Plan of Taunton by John Wood Historical Ordnance Survey Maps. Other Buildings Proposed for Demolition. I would have no objection to the removal of the other buildings proposed for demolition (Blocks H to VH), which are temporary classroom or store buildings. Other Issues The security fencing around the main building and the boarding-up of its doors need to be maintained as these are now breached and vandalism has occurred inside the building. Please advice the applicant. RECOMMENDATION I strongly recommend that this application be refused and the building retained, as this is an important building in the Staplegrove Road Conservation Area and one that should be considered a building of local interest. Its demolition would severely harm the

character, integrity and appearance of the conservation area and be contrary to the requirement of Structure Plan Deposit Draft Policy 9, Adopted Local Plan Policy EN15 and the advice in PPG 15, in particular paragraph 4.25-28. A key function of conservation area designation is to protect buildings such as this and the loss of this building would, in my view, undermine the status of this designation. I suggest that the applicant is given an opportunity to submit a statement on the architectural and historical merits of this building and why in their view its demolition should be considered. I would also be willing to meet with you and the applicant to discuss the potential of this site and how the building could be converted.

29 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- the former Bishop's Fox school has formed an important part of the main route into the town since the beginning of the twentieth Century and is a good example of municipal architecture that should be retained and sympathetically converted; the existing building is a good visual centrepiece for the Conservation Area,

TAUNTON AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY we accept the contention of the applicants that the existing former SCAT Annexe building on the Staplegrove Road is unsuitable for economic conversion to apartments. We consider that the former SCAT Annexe building does make (or would if sympathetically restored) a "positive contribution" (as defined in Local Plan Policy EN15) to the Staplegrove Road Conservation Area. In view of this we feel that any replacement for the building must strongly "enhance the appearance or character of the conservation area" (Policy EN14). If a scheme emerges that succeeds in this respect then we would not consider that the current building should be preserved. The derelict land and the clutter of temporary classrooms etc. on the site currently defaces the conservation area, and for this reason alone any high quality scheme that replaces them is welcome. We object to any consent to demolition (application 031) being given prior to the approval of a complete and satisfactory scheme for the whole site (together with a comprehensive section 106 agreement), and would further urge that demolition should not be permitted to start until the developer can show that building will commence as soon as demolition permits and that the appropriate contractual arrangements are in place for that building work.

POLICY CONTEXT

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Structure Plan Review the following policies are considered to be especially relevant:- Policy STR1 - Sustainable Development; 9 - The Built Environment.

Taunton Deane Local Plan the following policies are considered to be specially relevant:- EN14 Conservation Areas; EN15 Demolition Affecting Conservation Areas.

ASSESSMENT

The proposal is for the demolition of the SCAT annexe and 6 ancillary buildings. The site is located within the Staplegrove Conservation Area where there is a strong presumption against the demolition of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the area. The policy states that no such proposals will be considered unless an acceptable proposal for any redevelopment has been approved. The

current application involves the demolition of the former Bishop Fox's school, built in 1904, regarded by the Conservation Officer as "a building of architectural merit retained in its own right and ...it represents the work of prominent local architectural practise". It is therefore considered that the building should be retained and that its demolition would be contrary to policies EN14 and EN15 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan. In addition it is considered that the building makes a positive and significant contribution to the Staplegrove Conservation Area. Taunton Deane Local Plan policy EN15 established a strong presumption against such demolition and, in the rare circumstances where proposals for the demolition of buildings making a positive contribution are allowed, details of an acceptable replacement building must have been submitted and approved. In addition to the demolition of the main SCAT annexe the application proposes the demolition of a collection 6 more recent ancillary buildings. The demolition of these buildings would be welcome and would their removal in itself would enhance the character of the Staplegrove Road Conservation Area.

Proposal considered unacceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be REFUSED for the reasons of loss of an existing building making a positive contribution to the Staplegrove Conservation Area, lack of an acceptable redevelopment scheme.

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

CONTACT OFFICER: 356467 MRS J MOORE

NOTES: