

38/2004/025

GADD HOMES LIMITED

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING AND ERECTION OF FIVE STOREY BUILDING COMPRISING 2 OFFICE SUITES & 21 FLATS AT FOUR ALLS PUBLIC HOUSE, CORPORATION STREET, TAUNTON.

22528/24454

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks the demolition of the former Four Alls public house and its replacement with a mixed use building accommodating 21 flats and two office suites. The proposed building is five storeys in height with access to semi-basement car parking from Corporation Street.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY there is no visibility at the proposed accesses. Also the accesses are too close to the roundabout and the pedestrian crossing. Therefore I would recommend that this application be refused on highway grounds for the following reasons:- 1. The formation of an access together with the introduction of conflicting traffic movements on Corporation Street such as would be generated by the proposed development would be prejudicial to road safety. 2. The proposed accesses onto Corporation Street do not incorporate the necessary visibility splays which are essential in the interests of highway safety. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST the site lies within an Area of High Archaeological Potential as defined by the Local Plan (Policy EN24). It lies in the area identified by the English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey as being part of the Saxon town and burials have been discovered very close to the proposal site. Although it is accepted that there may be disturbance to the remains in this area it is likely that significant archaeology will be impacted by this proposal. However, at present the application contains insufficient information concerning the effects on remains. For this reason I recommend that the applicant be asked to provide further information on any archaeological remains on the site prior to the determination of this application. This is likely to require a field evaluation and I am happy to provide a specification for this work and a list of suitable archaeologists to undertake it. ENGLISH HERITAGE no information has been supplied on the existing building, which appears to date from the late 19th or early 20th century, and is brick and tile hung, with a banded clay tiled roof with ornate crestings. It has a moulded stone ground floor facade to the public house with a projecting timber bay on carved brackets above. The roof has several gables with ornate stone dressings to the oculi. The whole appears as a well-mannered but quite ornate example of a building of the period. It undoubtedly makes a positive contribution to the conservation area, enhanced by its key corner location at the convergence of Corporation St and The Crescent, looking out onto Park St, opposite County Hall. The applicants have provided no justification for the demolition in the terms required by PPG15, paragraphs 3.16-3.19 and 4.27, other than a brief mention of lack of viability. This is inadequate for a building whose presence enhances the appearance of the conservation area. English Heritage therefore objects to the demolition of this building. I

also have concerns regarding the replacement structure and in particular its scale in relation to the adjacent buildings of note, as well as its rather bland elevation treatment. This will harm the appearance of the conversation area when compared with the qualities of the existing described above.

CONSERVATION OFFICER (1) Demolition of Four Alls not justified in accordance with PPG15 - see observations on 38/2004/024CA. (2) Design statement lacking in detail and substantive justification for approach advocated. (3) Archaeological assessment required. (4) Principle of redevelopment - retain Four Alls or note - to be welcomed/encouraged (such would be even better if the adjoining single storey buildings on Corporation Street, were also included, hence providing a comprehensive scheme). (5) I have not considered the details of the proposal, as these are principle concerns reference the scale, massing, density, overdevelopment and un neighbourliness of the scheme. Objection raised. ARCHITECTURAL ADVISOR the site is located on the western edge of the Conservation Area. No. 14 The Crescent is a Listed Building which, together with Nos. 17/19 Bath Place, form an interesting group of predominantly two-storey vernacular brick buildings. The Four Alls Public House is a larger two-storey Arts and Crafts style building with good detailing, mouldings, etc. The site and building are extremely prominent, approaching Taunton town centre from the west. If the existing Public House is to be demolished, then an exemplary modern building on this prime site is essential. I consider that the 5 no. storey building proposed is not justified although the top storey is set back slightly. In the past, other new buildings in the vicinity have been limited to 3 no. storey and some of the design solutions have unfortunately been rather drab or mundane to say the very least. I am not convinced that the relationship of the new building, scale, mass etc have been fully considered and explored, and feel that it is unsympathetic and will totally dominate/dwarf the small scale buildings adjacent to Bath Place and Corporation Street, which form part of the intrinsic charm and character of the Conservation Area and Bath Place. It is also difficult to judge the impact of the new building without some three dimensional representation, which would help to show its relationship with the existing properties more clearly, as well as the courtyards/spaces formed and the modelling of the facades.

TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP the scale of this proposed building is out of proportion and context with its surroundings, and I would suggest not entirely fitting with the area as a conservation area. I appreciate that at this key entry point to the town centre it is important to have a landmark building but I think it is important that the building should not dwarf its neighbours. The scale of the Bath Place buildings and the building occupied by Sally Edwards cafe are I believe entirely dwarfed by this proposal. May I also ask that in any future proposal for this site the entry point to Bath Place, off The Crescent should be part of the enhancement.

CIVIC SOCIETY in respect of the proposals for the demolition and redevelopment of the old Four Alls, latterly the George; the committee of Taunton and District Civic Society are dismayed by what looks to be a case of gross overdevelopment. Furthermore, we are strongly against the removal of the frontage of the public house for several reasons. The Four Alls building has a long history; in the 1890s, when it had to make way for the building of Corporation Street, it was considered important enough to be carefully demolished and rebuilt in its present position. It appears in Harry Friers' painting, it is part of the Heritage Trail, and one of its old signs hangs in the Somerset County

Museum. Viv Richards and Ian Botham both liked to drink there, so it is part of Taunton's cricketing history as well. More importantly, the planned redevelopment would be an unpleasant neighbour to the remaining cottages, both 'Corsetry Cottage' in Bath Place, to which it would abut, and the ark, presently housing Sally Edwards restaurant, one of our oldest buildings whose distinctive but diminutive gable end could so easily be swamped by this insensitive plan. The scale of the proposed building, even after an amendment reducing the building to five storeys, is far too overwhelming for that particular site, and is just as out of scale on the less sensitive Corporation Street side. One of our members has pointed out that it would completely block the sun from Corporation Street for much of the day. This site is a main gateway to Taunton's town centre from the west, and is approached from several directions. Whereas the existing building is a warm looking, rather quirky and utterly unique introduction to the town, we can only consider the proposed development to be an oversized bulk, lacking aesthetic integrity. We urge you to insist on a development more fitting for this high profile, sensitive site.

BATH PLACE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION with the large change envisaged for this area of Corporation Street/Bath Place with the demise of the above, our Association wonder if the developers could be asked to contribute to the enhancement cum possible pedestrianisation of the Crescent end of Bath Place? We are aware Bath Place is a public highway until the first tunnel but, there are many times a day when accommodating cars, pedestrians and wheelchairs is a very risky affair. I attach a photocopy of a plan dated 1998 that was once put forward for the enhancement of the Crescent end of Bath Place. Secondly, Bath Place is in need of new lighting throughout the whole street- removing the present uplighters and replacing them with down lighters, lights have been identified for this purpose but the money required is not available. Thirdly, back in 2002 our Association had designed a wrought iron sign for the Crescent end of Bath Place, copy attached. Planning permission has not been sort, as the landlords of the Four Alls/George Pub would not countenance an approach until a solution to their property was found. Roger Hagley (Heritage -C/Council?) has seen the design and even suggested that lighting under the sign would work well.

FIVE LETTERS AND E-MAILS RAISING OBJECTION on the following grounds:- continued loss of landmark buildings in the town; impact on access to Unison House; building should be preserved; will dominate Dragon Bookshop building and entrance to Bath Place; parking problem; scale inappropriate; monolithic; building should be reused.

POLICY CONTEXT

The proposal needs to be judged against Policy 49 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review in respect of highway safety. In terms of new housing Policy H1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit is relevant - Housing development will be permitted within defined limits of settlements, provided that: (A) there is safe and convenient access by or on foot to facilities and employment. In the case of proposals of a significant scale, bus or walking access to a town centre or rural centre will be required, taking account of any off-site works proposed in accordance with criteria (B); (B) necessary provision is made for off-site public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities and highway improvements to cater safely for the expected number of trips generated by the development and minimise the proportion of car trips; (C) traffic calming, pedestrian, cycle and bus measures are

incorporated where necessary to give priority to safe and convenient access and circulation by means other than the car; (E) the layout allows people with impaired mobility or a disability safe and convenient access and movement to and between dwellings by careful positioning of potential obstructions, ramps, dropped kerbs, textured surfaces and reserved car parking;(G) small scale schemes in existing residential areas will increase the development density of these areas without individually or cumulatively eroding their character or residential amenity; (H) a coherent approach to the overall design is adopted, including layout, landscaping, building designs, materials, open spaces and circulation routes, to create locally distinctive developments well related to their surroundings; and (I) existing and proposed dwellings will enjoy adequate privacy and sunlight. Policy S1 is also relevant particularly criteria (D) harm to the appearance and character of the street scene.

Policies EN15, EN15 and EN17 are relevant in terms of impact on Conservation Area and siting of listed buildings. EN15 Development within or affecting a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it would preserve or enhance the appearance or character of the Conservation Area. EN16 There is a strong presumption against the demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Proposals involving the demolition of other buildings within or affecting a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless acceptable proposals for any redevelopment or new use for the site have been approved. This requirement will also apply in the very rare circumstances where proposals involving demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution are allowed. EN17 Development proposals which would harm a listed building, its setting or any features of special or historic interest which it possesses, will not be permitted.

ASSESSMENT

A five storey building in this location represents a gross overdevelopment of this site, which totally ignores the contributions to the character of the area that this site makes. The impact from this building would be devastating to this part of the town. It falls well short of the requirements for development in Conservation Areas.

Access from Corporation Street would create dangerous conflicting traffic movements which will conflict with highway safety.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be REFUSED for reasons of conflicting traffic movements, inadequate visibility splays, scale, massing, overdevelopment, impact upon Conservation Area and adjacent listed buildings.

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

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NOTES:

