

38/2005/422

CHURCHILL RETIREMENT LIVING LTD

REDEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE 48 SHELTERED HOUSING APARTMENTS FOR THE ELDERLY WITH COMMUNITY AMENITY SPACE CAR PARKING AND ACCESS AT 2 & 4 COMPASS HILL, TAUNTON AS AMPLIFIED BY ARBORICULTURAL APPRAISAL RECEIVED 18TH OCTOBER,2005 AND AMENDED BY LETTER AND PLAN NOS. CRL:10025TTP021 AND 10025TTP004A RECEIVED 28TH NOVEMBER, 2005 AND REVISION TO TRANSPORT STATEMENT RECEIVED 30TH NOVEMBER, 2005

22285/24249

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The application is for the redevelopment of the site to provide 48 Sheltered Housing apartments for the elderly with Community amenity space, car parking and access. Churchill Retirement Living specialise in the provision of purpose built retirement accommodation specifically designed for the elderly. The accommodation consists of self contained flats for sale in a single block. There will be a day manager on site as well as a guest suite and laundry. The apartments will be linked to a central alarm system which ensures security and safety for the owners. The flats will be sold with a lease restricting the age to people of 60 years or older and with a spouse of at least 55. Based on a survey of its existing sites the average occupier is a widow of 76. Sheltered housing meets a growing need in the local population, can release under occupied housing onto the open market and helps maximise brownfield sites, reducing the need for greenfield locations. The site is well related to essential facilities and high density redevelopment is encouraged by planning policy guidance. The site does not lie in a conservation area and the existing buildings are of no particular architectural merit. The buildings are not suitable for conversion and the proposal involves the demolition of dwellings on the site. An arboricultural report is submitted to address the amenity and health of the trees on the site. A wildlife report has been carried out indicating no protected species on site. A revised transport statement has been submitted to address highway objections. The access has been re-aligned to maximise the sightline, turning space for emergency vehicles has been included, a segregated pedestrian route is provided, a guardrail to the central island on the gyratory system is proposed as a deterrent to unsafe crossing movements. Parking numbers are reduced to 10, 8 for residents and one for the site warden and one for a visitor.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY: The development proposed is for 48 sheltered units with 16 car parking spaces and 'in' and 'out' accesses onto Compass Hill. The development proposes to modify the existing accesses to Nos. 2 & 4 and use them as

an 'in' and 'out' system. The site is at present occupied by two large dwellings which will have vehicle movements on and off Compass Hill. Using the nationally used TRIGS database it is likely that approximately 20 vehicle movements per day will have been generated by the existing dwellings. The applicant however, suggests that for such large houses 16 trips per dwelling per day would be more likely. TRIGS does not have information on sheltered accommodation. However, the applicants' in their Transport Assessment provide trip generation figures for an existing similar development. Using these figures on a pro-rata basis the proposed development will generate approximately 87 trips per day. Based on the applicants' figures this represents almost a three-fold increase in conflicting movements on and off the public highway. The A38 Compass Hill is part of a one-way gyratory system and carries a large volume of traffic which is constantly manoeuvring across lanes. Whilst I consider that the in-movements will likely not create significant highway problems the egress location causes concern. The access is at an acute angle which makes observation of on-coming vehicles difficult. Accesses on the section of road where lane markings are in place which direct traffic in specific locations and excess manoeuvring by vehicles joining this carriageway will create additional hazards. In addition, the egress is very close to the traffic signal controlled Parkfield Road junction and the ability of a driver to view the traffic signals in one direction and on-coming vehicles in the opposite direction at the same time, could prove very difficult and create additional hazards. The applicants suggest that the site is very accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and whilst being on the edge of town centre which would point in this direction it is true to say in fact, that the safe pedestrian route for elderly residents is quite convoluted and the distances required to walk to shops and bus stops is in excess of the target distance for bus stops and food shops as set out for principal urban areas in RPGIO Annex A. It is possible that pedestrians will not take the detour to use the signal crossings, which in itself requires crossing at several sections of carriageway but will take a chance and cross where it is less safe but a more direct route. In consequence, I feel that there is no alternative other than to recommend the refusal of this application. A suitable reason for refusal would be -

- 1 The increased use of the existing access together with the generation of additional conflicting traffic movements, such as would result from the proposed development, would be prejudicial to road safety.
- 2 The use of the access to the site in connection with the development proposed, would be likely to increase the conflict of traffic movements close to an existing junction resulting in additional hazard and inconvenience to all users of the road.
- 3 The proposed development is likely to generate an increase in pedestrian traffic at a point where the most direct route to town centre facilities involves crossing the carriageway in a particularly hazardous location and is therefore prejudicial to Road Safety.

Formal Highway Authority comments in relation to the revised access and parking provision will be reported at the Committee meeting.

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST: There are limited or no archaeological implications to this proposal and we therefore have no objections on archaeological grounds.

WESSEX WATER: The development is located in a sewered area. It will be necessary for the developer to agree a point of connection onto the system for the satisfactory disposal of foul flows generated from the proposal. The developer has proposed to dispose of surface water to mains. We have requested the investigation of the use of soakaways or SUDS solutions in order to keep the volume rate of discharge to a minimum, as the sewerage system is combined in this area. It is advised the Council should be satisfied with the arrangement for the satisfactory disposal of surface water

from the proposal. There is a public foul sewer crossing the site and normally a 3m easement is required for the purpose of maintenance and repair. Diversion or protection works may need to be agreed. A condition or informative is recommended to protect the integrity of Wessex systems and infrastructure. There are water mains in the area and connection can be agreed at the design stage.

POLICE ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON OFFICER: I have studied the associated drawings and would raise the following concerns. Road safety - I have serious concerns regarding the vehicular exit provisions onto Compass Hill. I accept that there is already an entrance/exit at this location. However, I would suggest that a development of this size is likely to generate an increase in the number of vehicles, both private and commercial, exiting onto the main road. As this road is very busy and often subjected to heavy vehicular congestion (including emergency access to the hospital), I am concerned that vehicles leaving the development at this point may cause considerable traffic problems especially at busy times. This is particularly apparent when considering the road markings that create two separate traffic lanes (turn left and straight on) and a vehicle exiting the development, intending to continue in a southerly direction along Wellington Road, being required to take up a position in the offside lane. Security - I have some concerns that it appears on drawing no.CRL:10025TTP004 that it would be possible to gain uncontrolled pedestrian access to the rear of the development. I feel that this would affect security and I would therefore recommend that suitable lockable gates/ fencing should be erected at either side of the building. These gates should be to 1.8 metres in height and perhaps of a wrought iron, or similar construction to allow view through the gate from either side.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER: My main concerns are there is no detailed arboricultural survey so details and assessment of trees worthy of retention cannot be made at this stage. The street frontage looks very hard and imposing. There should be scope for major street trees to soften the impact of the proposals. The building extends a long way to the rear of the property and limits both the retention of existing trees or the mitigation potential. I suggest at least 5m should be allowed for proper mitigation. There is scope for a much more interesting range of exotic trees with the proposals. No hard landscaping should be proposed within existing tree canopies eg. formal knot garden. The off site cedar to the north will need special protection both during construction and after if it is to survive. The arboricultural appraisal sets out accurately the health and condition of the trees, however TIO has the potential to mature into a fine specimen tree of high amenity. The conifers G33 have an important screening value and should be retained in the short term.

HOUSING OFFICER: The Housing Service support this application. In order to satisfy the need we would initially be looking for 4 elderly persons dwellings together with a commuted sum of £516,225 which represents 10.4 units. This would equate to a total of 14.4 affordable housing units. A revised figure of £350,000 as a commuted sum for off site provision is accepted to be paid prior to the start of construction work.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER: No observations.

DRAINAGE OFFICER: It is indicated that surface water run off will be discharged to the public sewer system. Wessex Water should therefore be consulted regarding adequate capacity within their

sewer system to accommodate those extra flows and not cause/exacerbate any flooding capacity problems they may have.

9 NINE LETTERS OF OBJECTION from neighbours raising issues of the arboricultural appraisal does not take account of the Tree Preservation Order and a new appraisal should be undertaken. Question 11 of the application form stating no trees will be felled is wrong. A large number of trees are to be felled including a large cypress, G33, which gives significant cover to the boundary. Trees clean air, reduce noise and are an excellent amenity and a large number of trees would be lost by the development. 3 trees have been felled prior to the application, don't appear on the appraisal but were there on the day of the inspection. An independent tree survey should be carried out and the appraisal document should be referred to the TPO Department of the Council. The 3/4 storey development is out of proportion with existing dwellings and the character of the area. Noise will increase particularly in warm weather with windows open. Impact on wildlife. Bats have been seen in the area and an expert should be on site as a condition. The 3 and 4 storey development will result in the loss of privacy with many windows overlooking and from a higher level than the adjacent property. The height and mass of the block is out of proportion with the adjacent dwelling and will have a detrimental affect on the amenity value. Glazed opening would be within 15m of bedroom windows and there would be 26 openings overlooking the house and garden. The distances on the submitted plan are incorrect, it being closer than illustrated. Loss of light. Access and drainage would affect the cedar tree. On site soakaways could cause partial flooding of garden and could impact on trees. Alterations to the road frontage will increase noise levels due to traffic. Trees on the north west boundary are protected by a legal restrictive covenant. It is not possible to implement the scheme as submitted. The two storey family houses would be lost for no good reason as they are distinctive and a valuable feature in the area and demolition would be an irremediable loss. The application form states no trees will be felled this is not true. Trees at the rear of the site should be retained. The development will have implications for the water table, property structures around and the trees. A geological survey should be provided to assess drainage, the water table and structural impact on neighbours. There will be a privacy impact with windows overlooking at a 4 storey height. There will be a loss of value of properties. The proposal will substantially increase traffic with services and cause congestion with safety implications. Pedestrian access to Town or Tesco is hazardous and is not in convenient walking distance. Elderly will not be aware of hazards of pedestrian access. The access exit will conflict with the entrance to Kells and will be dangerous. Additional parking spaces should be provided. There are errors in the Transport Statement as no separate footpath is shown on the drawing. The proposed exit only will also serve as an entry to the existing house and pedestrian entrance to the flats. There will remain two entrances onto Compass Hill. Visits from relatives and care workers will increase vehicle movements beyond negligible. The access to No.6 has been permanently sealed. Cycle route provision is questionable. The bus stop access is not easily accessible. The town centre is 540m away depending on the route taken. The closest bus stop is 220m away and these distances are not acceptable for the elderly. Safe access is crucial to viability. The traffic lights are not shown on the plan. There is insufficient space to change lanes and there is no convenient access to the town centre. Statistics of accidents on Compass Hill would be relevant. Boundary wall alterations will have major impact on amenity and street furniture. Non designated areas will be used for parking. Electric mopeds are becoming a hazard on roads and footpaths. The assumptions in relation to traffic flow are invalid. Spurious and inaccurate statistics are

used based on invalid assumptions to justify the unjustifiable. This will create a major safety hazard and must be rejected.

POLICY CONTEXT

Regional Planning Guidance for the South West - RGP10

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review STR1 Sustainable Development, STR4 Development in Towns Policy 33, Housing Policy 35, Affordable Housing Policy 48, Access and Parking Policy 49, Transport Requirements in New Development

Taunton Deane Local Plan S1, General Requirements S2, Design H2, Housing H4, Self-Contained Accommodation H9, Affordable Housing M4, Parking EN6, Protection of Trees, Woodlands, Orchards and Hedgerows ENS, Trees in and Around Settlements EN9 - Tree Planting

ASSESSMENT

The main considerations with the proposal are the impact on the street scene and character of the area, the impact on highway safety in terms of the altered access provision and parking, the impact on the trees on the site and landscaping, the impact on privacy and the drainage provision and finally the affordable housing provision. The scheme provides a two, three and four storey development of flats in place of two existing detached two storey dwellings at 2 and 4 Compass Hill. The roadside boundary wall will be altered to improve visibility and to the rear of this a street elevation of varying height is proposed to reflect the design characteristics of buildings in the area. The access alterations initially result in a loss of roadside planting and replacement of this with a new planting scheme is considered necessary. The street scene elevation is considered to be in keeping with the style of buildings in the area and policy S2 and an improvement over the design of existing flats on Compass Hill. The access to the site is proposed via an in and out system modifying the existing access to No.4 and utilising the access to No.2 as an exit. The scheme has been revised following discussions with the Highway Authority to reduce the parking provision to 10 spaces, including one for the on site warden and one visitor space. Members have accepted a car free development on the opposite side of Compass Hill and the current scheme with reduced and limited parking has been carefully considered. The exit out onto the main road has also been modified to provide a safer access in visibility terms. A reduction in the width of the access through the site is required to ensure additional parking does not occur. This area will be utilised by soft landscaping and will enable tree planting to the road frontage to occur. A defined pedestrian route is also proposed. The site is considered to be well related to the town centre and there is considered to be a safe access route to town to comply with policy H2. The Highway Authority's formal response is awaited, although their principle agreement to the changes has been given. The existing site has

a number of trees within it and after a number were felled a Tree Preservation Order was imposed on the site. For speed this was applied to every tree, although clearly not every tree on the site is worthy of retention. As part of the application the applicant has produced an arboricultural appraisal of the trees on the site and this is considered by the Landscape Officer to accurately set out their health and condition. Recommendations have been made in terms of felling certain trees and while the majority of these are accepted it is considered necessary to control this by condition to ensure adequate tree retention is maintained to the boundaries of the site. The landscape proposals are therefore to be subject to modification and will be subject of conditions to ensure tree retention and planting to comply with policies EN 8 and 9.

The building proposed is set back 16m from the road frontage and extends over a length of 44m. The size of the building is large in relation to the existing dwellings on site but will increase density without eroding character or amenity given distances maintained to boundaries. To the south east the building is 8m from the boundary and there are two mature trees on this boundary, a yew and an elder. Given the limited tree cover and the fact that the dwelling to the south east is at a higher level it is considered appropriate to condition the obscure glazing of upper floor windows. The development on the north west boundary projects 42m into the site. There is a distance of 32m to the south east boundary which is considered sufficient in terms of amenity and privacy and also a 10.5m gap to the rear boundary which is screened by mature trees. The space to the north west boundary is 6.5m at the closest, adjacent to the dwelling at Kells, while to the rear the distance is 10m. Again there is a significant tree screen to a height of around 10m high or more in places along this boundary while the eaves level of the building is 7.5m. This impact and distance is considered to be acceptable in terms of policy H2 despite the objections of the neighbour. The applicant has initially proposed surface water drainage to the mains. Wessex Water advise that alternatives such as soakaways should be investigated and a suitable arrangement should be found. Concerns have been raised that soakaways to serve the site would not be suitable and could affect flooding. A condition to address the provision of adequate surface water disposal is considered appropriate and necessary. The development proposes 48 sheltered housing units on site. Clearly this exceeds the threshold of 25 units in terms of the affordable housing policy. There is an identified need for sheltered housing provision and this need is being met by the development proposed. There is an issue of being able to provide suitable on site provision for a separate Housing Association development given the access and parking limitations here and the need to achieve the most efficient use of the land. The applicant has been in discussions with the Housing Enabler and given the needs situation has agreed the provision of a commuted sum for off site provision on the basis that permission is granted. This sum of £350,000 is considered acceptable in the circumstances and the recommendation will need to include a S106 Agreement to incorporate this. In summary the site is considered to be well related to the town centre and a suitable site for redevelopment subject to traffic issues. The limitation of parking on site on the advice of the Highway Authority has resulted in no highway safety objection being raised. The impact on adjacent properties is considered to be acceptable given boundary treatments and a planting condition and the applicant proposes an acceptable affordable housing contribution. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to no further observations raising new issues by 15th December and a Section 106 Agreement to provide a commuted sum of £350,000 for offsite affordable housing provision and tying the occupation to the elderly over 60 the development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED with conditions of time limit, materials, sample brick panel, landscaping, materials for drives, details of surface water disposal, trees retained, protection of trees, service trenches, hard landscaping, obscure glazing of second and third floor windows to units 27, 28,42 and 43 on the south east elevation, details of parking layout, access provided prior to construction on building commencing.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION The proposal is considered an appropriate redevelopment site close to the town centre and to comply with Taunton Deane Local Plan policies SI, S2, H2, H4, H9, EN6 and ENS and material considerations do not indicate otherwise.

If the Section 106 is not signed by 15th December the Development Control Manager be authorised to REFUSE permission as contrary to the Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy H9.

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: