

38/2004/424

WESTROCK

**ERECTION OF BUILDING COMPRISING THIRTEEN FLATS ON LAND ADJACENT TO WESSEX LODGE, 11/13 BILLET STREET, TAUNTON.**

22965/24358

FULL PERMISSION

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**PROPOSAL**

The application site lies immediately to the north of Wessex Lodge, a Grade II listed Victorian building which stands on the corner of Billetfield and Billet Street. The site is currently used for car parking. The frontage to Billet Street is currently by a brick wall. The existing access is located at the northern end of the site.

The proposed building provides a mix of three and four storey accommodation comprising thirteen flats. The submitted design statement suggests that the building "takes on proportions and details from Wessex Lodge, but with a modern twist". Two parking spaces are shown at the southern end of the site adjacent to Wessex Lodge.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the turning space shown on the submitted plan is of insufficient size to enable a vehicle to turn before entering the highway in forward gear. The visibility at the proposed access is substandard. I would recommend that this application be refused on highway grounds for the following reasons:- 1. The proposed access to the development does not incorporate the necessary visibility splays, which are essential in the interests of highway safety. 2. The site cannot accommodate adequate turning facilities to enable a vehicle to enter and leave the highway in forward gear, which is essential to highway safety. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST The site lies within an Area of High Archaeological Potential as defined by the Local Plan (Policy EN24). It is within the medieval town and is very close to the town ditch. It is very likely that medieval remains relating to past use of the site are present. However, at present insufficient information is contained in the application to assess the impact on the 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. I am happy to provide a specification for this work and a list of suitable archaeologists to undertake it. Subsequent comments:- Could you place the following condition on this planning permission:- "No development hereby approved shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work involving a full evaluation and subsequent further stages of work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority.", as you can see it means that the applicant has to carry out an evaluation followed by any further work required. WESSEX WATER The development is located within a foul sewer 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 by the proposal. This can be agreed at the detailed design stage. The developer has proposed to dispose of surface water to existing mains. As there are no existing public/separate surface water sewers in the vicinity of the site, it is advised that the developer investigate alternative methods for the satisfactory disposal of surface water from the site (e.g. soakaways). Surface water should not be discharged to the foul sewer. Your Council should be satisfied with any suitable arrangement for the disposal of surface water. With respect to water supply, there are water mains within the vicinity of the proposal. Again, connection can be agreed at the design stage. It is recommended that the developer should agree with Wessex Water, prior to the commencement of any works on site, a connection onto Wessex Water infrastructure. According to our records, there is a public foul water sewer crossing the site. Please find enclosed a copy of our sewer records indicating the approximate position of the apparatus. Wessex Water normally requires a minimum, three-metre, easement width on either side of its apparatus, for the purpose of maintenance and repair. Diversion or protection works may need to be agreed. It is further recommended that a condition or informative is placed on any consent to require the developer to protect the integrity of Wessex systems and agree prior to the commencement of works on site, any arrangements for the protection of infrastructure crossing the site. The developer must agree in writing prior to the commencement of works on site, any arrangements for the protection of our infrastructure crossing the site. POLICE ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON I would recommend that the rear of the building should be fenced and/or gated to prevent unauthorised access around the whole building.

CONSERVATION OFFICER 1. From the file, I assume the only plan formally submitted for consideration at this time, is 097-020. If this is the case, we clearly need a block plan, showing the proposed footprint of the building in relation to the site, so we can assess the assertion that "the building has been located away from all boundary walls in order that the building can breathe". 2. Whilst a Design Statement has been submitted and I agree that Wessex Lodge is "the foremost architectural feature in the area", this should not be the only driving force in the design. Indeed, the design of any proposal here could reasonably be expected to acknowledge/reflect the late C19 buildings which comprise the immediate setting of Wessex Lodge i.e. those in Billet Street and Billetfield. 3. Mindful of comments at 2 above, I consider the proposed design to be unsatisfactory for a number of reasons:- (a) in order to maximise the number of units, the proposed building does not incorporate any ancillary elements but rather presents a similar mass/scale on all elevations. (b) again in order to maximise the number of units, accommodation in the roof is provided, which results in a non-traditional roofscape and prominent rooflights. (c) whilst the turret feature is reflective of Wessex Lodge and a feature such as this is not to be discouraged, it does not have the presence of the former, due to roofscape observations at (b) and an over-wide, competitive gable feature on elevation D. In addition, due to the transition between "turret" and adjoining elevations, the former appears as an after thought, rather than an integral element. (d) elevations D and C are generally bland and elevations B is very disappointing in this respect, with flat roofed dormers being wholly inappropriate. Whilst I understand the applicants concentration on the Billet Street elevation, a good building stands up to scrutiny in the round and this proposal sadly does not. Summary:- The proposal in my opinion, is lacking on a number of counts with regard to design and the setting of Wessex Lodge, such as to outweigh the approach advocated by PPG3 and the

development plan. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER suggests noise control condition. LEISURE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER this development should make a contribution of £806.00 per each 1 bed dwelling for sport plus a contribution of £2,056.00 per each dwelling consisting of 2 or more bedrooms for play and sport. This to be spent on improving the provision of recreation in the local area.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy 49 states:-  
TProposals for development should be compatible with the existing transport infrastructure, or, if not, provision should be made for improvements to infrastructure to enable development to proceed. In particular development should: provide access for pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists and public transport; provide safe access to roads of adequate standard within the route hierarchy and, unless the special need for and benefit of a particular development would warrant an exception, not derive access directly from a National Primary or County Route; and, in the case of development which will generate significant freight traffic, be located close to rail facilities and/or National Primary Routes or suitable County Routes subject to satisfying other Structure Plan policy requirements.

Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Draft. The following policies are relevant:-  
Policy S1 Proposals for development, taking account of any mitigation measures proposed, will be required to meet the following criteria, in addition to any other Development Plan policies which apply in a particular case: (A) additional road traffic arising, taking account of any road improvements involved, would not lead to overloading of access roads, road safety problems or environmental degradation by fumes, noise, vibrations or visual impact.

Policy S2 Development must be of a good design. Its scale, density, height, massing, layout, landscaping, colour, materials and access arrangements will be assessed to ensure that the proposal will, where reasonable and feasible: (A) reinforce the local character and distinctiveness of the area, including the landscape setting of the site and any settlement, street scene and building involved; (B) incorporate existing site features of environmental importance.

Policy H1 Housing development will be permitted within defined limits of settlements, provided that:- (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.

Policy 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**

The determining factors in this case appear to be firstly the impact of the proposal upon highway safety and secondly the form, bulk and design of the building as it relates both to Wessex Lodge and the Billet Street frontage. The site lies with Taunton town centre where a car free development may be considered acceptable. However, two parking spaces are proposed. It is therefore essential that adequate turning space is provided and that visibility is also provided for vehicles exiting the site. As advised by the Highway Authority, the turning space shown is insufficient and visibility substandard.

The second issue relates to the concerns raised by the Conservation Officer. Whilst the building is not as tall as Wessex Lodge, it is of a scale and proximity that competes and therefore detracts from its setting. The design presents a similar mass/scale on all elevations with little interest in any elevations other than that fronting Billet Street, and incorporates an inappropriate roof scape which does not sit easily with the proposed turret.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be REFUSE for reasons of lack of necessary visibility splays, inadequate turning facilities and that the building by reason of its form, bulk and designs will be an overdominant feature in the street scene detracting from Wessex Lodge.

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

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356464 MR T BURTON**

NOTES: