

43/2004/051

BEECHWOOD HOUSE DEVELOPMENT LTD

**DEMOLITION OF EXISTING WAREHOUSE AND ERECTION OF BLOCK OF 14 FLATS, FORMER HAYMANS COAL YARD, WESTFORD, WELLINGTON.**

12032/20278

FULL PERMISSION

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**PROPOSAL**

The proposal provides for the demolition of an existing warehouse and the erection of a new block of 14 flats. The existing building is constructed of natural stone with a slate roof. Some of the walling in the new building will utilise the stone salvaged from the demolition of the existing building, which is currently empty and last used as a coal merchant's warehouse and yard. The remainder of the walling will be block and render with the roof natural slate. The accommodation will provide 8 one bedroom flats, 5 two bedroom flats and 1 three bedroom flats. 23 parking spaces are proposed. A previous similar application was refused in December 2003 on grounds of submitted flood risk assessment being inappropriate and that the proposed development made inadequate provision for local play and leisure provision. There is an extant permission for conversion of the existing building into 14 flats, renewed in 2001.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the site has a current permission for conversion to 14 flats. On the basis that the proposed building will be a replacement with the same number of flats, and therefore a similar level of traffic generation, it would be unreasonable to object to the proposal on highway grounds. In the event of permission being granted would request that condition be imposed re visibility splays at proposed points of access. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST limited or no archaeological implications to the proposal, therefore have no objections on archaeological grounds. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY activities previously undertaken at the site may have caused contamination of soil, sub-soil and groundwater present beneath the site and may present a threat to nearby surface waters, especially as a result of the proposed development. Notwithstanding this, the Agency has no objections in principle to the proposed development but recommends conditions regarding contaminated land study and investigation, fuel oil storage, bunding floor levels to be set at least 600 mm above the 1:100 year (1% probability) flood level of 61.6 m AOD and no building over culvert. The Agency will require the applicant to install additional pollution control measures when disposing of surface water run off from the development. SOMERSET INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY object because it involves the unnecessary demolition of the warehouse which is historically significant and provides important landscape evidence of a major local industry. There is a valid planning permission for conversion of the warehouse in a sympathetic manner retaining its essential shape, size and features, together with provision for archaeological recording of the building. The building was part of a large integrated woollen factory operated by Elworthy Brothers & Co, which was a large factory which made a major contribution to the development of the area. Hayman's warehouse dates from the 1820's when the

firm's founder developed the Westford factory and is one of the oldest buildings on the site. In its early years this building was probably not a warehouse but part of the main mill and was powered by water taken from the main mill leat. It is possible given the date and circumstances that the building is an early local example of 'fireproof' construction. The building therefore has historical and architectural significance and a good case could be made for its listing. The Society believes it is important to retain some visible evidence of such a significant local development as the Elworthy mill. There should be a presumption against demolition of the warehouse if conversion is possible, and the previous permission should be implemented. Archaeological recording of the building should be a planning condition, irrespective of whether demolition or conversion is finally permitted. The recording should also include evidence associated with the site's more recent use as a coalyard since these are themselves now becoming rare features of the landscape. The recording should include a watching brief during construction works since some features such as underground watercourses may only become apparent as work progresses. In summary, the Society believes there is no compelling reason for the demolition of the warehouse and that the application should be refused and the previous permission, including the recording, be implemented. WESSEX WATER the development is located within a foul sewer area. Points of connection can be agreed for foul drainage and water supply at the detailed stage.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER it will be difficult to integrate the proposed new three storey flats into this edge of countryside location within the limited landscape enhancement potential of the site. Would recommend a 10 m belt of shrub and tree landscaping on the southern boundary of the site to soften the above impact. The revised scheme has more landscaping along the southern boundary but still not enough to properly integrate the proposals into this edge of countryside site. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER due to the possibility of contamination arising from previous use of the site, recommends a contaminated land investigation and remediation condition. DRAINAGE OFFICER notes that surface water is to be discharged to soakaways. These should be constructed in accordance with Building Research Digest 365. LEISURE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER this partial reapplication would generate a contribution for off-site facilities and would ask that seek to achieve the maximum contributions for play and sports provision. As usual the sums are £806 for sport per dwelling and £1,250 for play per two bed and above dwellings, which results in a contribution of £18,784. If there is an intention to submit applications for housing on the rest of the site (as with the original application), would prefer the play element to be dealt with on site and for there to be no off-site contribution for play.

TOWN COUNCIL opposed because it will worsen the already difficult traffic problems in Westford.

LETTER OF OBJECTION FROM ROCKWELL GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL village school serves up to 200 children and their families, many of whom walk or cycle to school; increased volume of traffic gives concern as many of the children and families come to school from that direction along a route that has little or no pavement, a narrow dangerous road with numerous obstacles and hazards and already hazardous traffic conditions; should seriously consider upgrading provision for pedestrians and install traffic calming along the route through the village as part of the requirements should permission be granted.

TWO LETTERS OF OBJECTION roads unsuitable for the development; access roads through Rockwell Green are narrow, tortuous, and impeded by parked vehicles making it unsafe; danger to pedestrians due to lack of pavements; traffic calming would not help; if and when the larger development of this brown field area is submitted the only safe measure would be for a new road from the sites across fields to the main road beyond Rockwell Green; area of the bridge over the Westford Stream is liable to flood, together with the mill building, the road and the footpath along the stream; plans do not take account of the serious risk of flooding, with the situation now, climate change and the requirement to plan for the 1:100 year standard; plans do not show an adequate number of trees to be planted; no plan to provide a play area on the site, concern that the payment in lieu will not be used for the benefit of the local area; will destroy the character of the area by knocking down perfectly decent old buildings which would enhance the area by being developed sympathetically; already permission to convert to flats; if the area is going to be developed it should be done with sympathy; to build new is to disregard the surrounding houses and put a new estate up; developers should put money into ensuring that what they create fits in with the surroundings and the people who have to live with it.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

Policy STR1 of the County Structure Plan contains criteria for sustainable development, including ones that (a) development should develop a pattern of land use and transport which minimises the length of journeys and the need to travel and maximises the potential for the use of public transport, cycling and walking; and (b) give priority to the continued use of previously developed land and buildings. Policy WD/HO/3 of the West Deane Local Plan states that within the identified limits of settlements the development of new housing will normally be permitted provided that certain criteria are met. Policy WD/HO/7 of the same plan sets out guidelines for the design and layout of new housing developments. Policy S1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit includes general requirements for new developments. One of these requirements is that the accessibility of the development by public transport, cycling and pedestrian networks would be consistent with its likely trip generation and minimising the need to use the car. Policy S2 of the same plan provides guidelines for the design of new developments. Policy H1 states that housing development will be permitted within defined limits of settlements provided certain criteria are met. It is considered that these criteria are met with the current proposal. Policies EN30 and EN31 provide policy guidance on land liable to flood and flooding due to development.

## **ASSESSMENT**

English Heritage has inspected the building and considers that it does not meet the criteria for listing. The Local Planning Authority therefore cannot prevent the demolition of the warehouse building. The site is a brownfield site within the settlement limits. There is an existing firm boundary to the south of the site in the form of a 1.9 m high block wall. Whilst the new building will come closer to this boundary than the existing building, I consider that the revised landscaping proposals will provide some softening of the impact of the new building. The materials are largely render and natural slate, which relate well to other buildings in the area, and parts of the elevations are to

incorporate stone salvaged from the existing building. There is an extant permission for the conversion of the existing building to a similar number of flats and on this basis, the County Highway Authority do not object to the current application. The Environment Agency now no longer object to the proposal.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Subject to the applicants entering into a Section 106 Agreement with the Council by 23rd July 2004 to secure the provision of £18,784 towards off site play and leisure/sport facilities the Chief Planning Officer be authorised to determine the application in consultation with the Chairman and if permission is GRANTED be subject to conditions of materials, foul and surface water drainage, landscaping (hard and soft), visibility splays, parking, meter boxes, detailed record to be taken and reported, contaminated land investigation and remediation, removal of GPDO rights for means of enclosure, fuel oil storage, bunding, floor levels to be set at least 600 mm above the 1:100 year (1% probability) flood level of 61.6 m AOD and no building over culvert Notes re disabled access, energy/water conservation, meter boxes, compliance note, CDM Regulations, S106, bats/owls, removal of asbestos, contact Wessex Water, advice of Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society, contaminated land remediation, protection of Major Aquifer, compliance with the Oil Storage Regulations and have regard to Sustainable Drainage Systems. In the event that the Section 106 Agreement has not been concluded by 23rd July 2004, the Chief Planning Officer be authorised to determine the application in consultation with the Chairman and permission be REFUSED on grounds that inadequate provision has been made for recreation facilities.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposed development is in compliance with current and emerging development plan policies. The building is not worthy of listing and therefore its demolition cannot be prevented by the Local Planning Authority. The site is a brownfield site within the settlement limits where residential development is acceptable in principle.

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

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356461 MR J HAMER**

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