

38/2005/214

BARNADOS DEVELOPMENTS LTD RETIREMENT VILLAGES PLC

ERECTION OF APARTMENT BLOCK OF 20 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS AT FORMER PRINCESS MARGARET SCHOOL SITE, MIDDLEWAY, TAUNTON.

22373/23568

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

Erection of apartment block of 20 affordable housing units at former Princess Margaret School site, Middleway, Taunton.

Permission was granted in November 2004, application 38/03/549, for the demolition of the principal buildings on the site of Blagdon Lodge and the Princess Margaret School and the erection of retirement village containing 72 apartments, 11 bungalows and 11 houses. The current application is for affordable housing that was required through a Section 106 Agreement on that previously approved application.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY in terms of overall traffic generation the proposed development is likely to have the same volume of traffic as current permission. However, the submitted plans show a change in the internal arrangements, swapping the traffic of two dwellings and 20 affordable housing units. The access via the existing coach house is substandard for any substantial increase in traffic volume above that which currently has approval. I understand that the existing approval is for the coach house and two dwellings to use this access. Therefore, by swapping the two dwellings with the 20 affordable housing units, it would create an additional 18 units using the coach house access, above existing approval. Which is likely to be detrimental to road safety at this location. The 20 affordable housing units should therefore access the site via the main entrance and the two dwellings via the coach house access. I would therefore request that the applicant submits revised plans to reflect these comments.

WESSEX WATER the development is located in a sewered area with foul and surface water sewers available. The developer has proposed to dispose of surface water to existing surface water sewer. It will be necessary for the developer to agree points of connection to the system. According to our records there is a public water main and surface water sewer close to the site. Normally a minimum 3 metre easement is required for the purpose of maintenance and repair. Diversion or protection work may need to be agreed. An informative is recommended to be placed on any consent to require the protection of Wessex systems prior to commencement of works on site.

AVON AND SOMERSET CONSTABULARY there appears to be a small number of parking spaces for this part of the development raising questions as to where residents are going to park. I have some concerns regarding road safety and security if residents vehicles are to be parked away from their homes and not under close surveillance.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER overall the scheme provides scope for a reasonable landscape scheme, however I think that there is scope for more tree planting within the areas of open space and the group of trees on the southern boundary need thinning to favour more appropriate species. CONSERVATION OFFICER some of the design issues addressed from the earlier scheme. Sense of arrival is still poor. Suggest parking in front of building moved. A coloured bound gravel for the access road, turning and parking may be a better solution than a combination of tarmac and block paving. Landscape Officer will no doubt comment on this aspect. I suggest close boarded fencing is re-specified as hazel hurdles so climbing plants can readily establish. Materials will still be important here and suggest sample panels of brickwork/render are conditioned. DRAINAGE OFFICER no observations. HOUSING OFFICER we are anxious to see social housing on this valuable site, close to the town centre, at a level which has been agreed to reflect the need for elderly accommodation.

WILTON AND SHERFORD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION it is still apparent that the degree of segregation can be further reduced by the removal of the internal boundary hedging and revised landscaping of this area. Whilst I quite understand that there will be no offer of services due to the financial implications of the main site dwellers, there is actually no need to create physical segregation within the site. The occupants of the social housing I am sure will be made aware of what is or is not available to them. On the issue of parking the developer states that there are 104 spaces to serve 86 units, giving a ration of 1.2 per dwelling. This is true for the main village but for the social housing this is not the case and it appears that the provision is only 0.6 per dwelling. The area of Middleway and Churchill Way has recently come under scrutiny from this Association and the Highways department of SCC. The area has become a stomping ground for an increasing number of commuters and parking is being revised to ensure that this occurs in a safe manner. I can advise that on road parking in this area is such that it could not cope with the added pressure of even more cars. The ratio of the social housing should reflect the same level as the main village and not be deprived because of its status as "social housing" nor should the existing residents be inflicted with even more congestion.

POLICY CONTEXT

RPG10 South West Regional planning Guidance. Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR1 Sustainable Development, STR4 Development in Towns, Policy35 Affordable Housing, Policy49 Transport Requirements of New Development. Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 General Requirements, S2 Design, H2 Housing within Settlements, H9 Affordable Housing, M4 Parking.

ASSESSMENT

This application is for the provision of an apartment block of affordable housing units in a block of 20 to blend in with the design of the rest of the site which has had approval under permission 38/2003/549. This application is also linked to application 38/2005/217 (see later report) which seeks to re-site two retirement cottages from the

previous approval to allow for the provision of a new access to serve the affordable units. The main issues with the current proposal are the design, parking and access. A previous application in November 2004 was withdrawn following concern being raised over the scheme being inferior to the previous approval.

The apartment block as now submitted has been altered in terms of the roof structure and the articulation and design of the bay window features. The block is now of a size, design and detailing which is considered to reflect that of the other apartment blocks approved on the remainder of the site and is considered acceptable and in compliance with Policy S2.

The parking shown around the new affordable housing block shows 12 parking spaces. In relation to the remainder of the site this is less than the 1.2 spaces per unit as identified by the Residents Association, however the provision of 12 spaces for the elderly in a block of 20 affordable units is not considered to be sufficient to warrant an objection to the scheme in light of policy M4.

The access to serve the site is of a subsidiary access off Middleway that previously was to serve the Coach House and two pairs of cottages only, although emergency access through gates would be maintained. This access has limited visibility which cannot be improved due the position of the Coach House to the north. While the provision of a separate access to the affordable housing block is not objected to in principle the current scheme does not achieve the necessary visibility required for highway safety and is considered an inferior layout to that previously approved. The layout provides more physical barriers between the affordable block and the rest of the village which is disappointing and limits its assimilation with the rest of the site. The importance of providing affordable housing on this site in line with policy H9 is recognised. However, in light of the Highway Authority objection to the scheme, its limited assimilation into the site as a whole and the ability to provide a working alternative under the previously approved scheme it is considered that the current application is not acceptable and is therefore recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be REFUSED for reasons of inadequate visibility at the access to serve the affordable housing contrary to Policy49 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and means of access and proposed setting of the building is inferior to the previous approval and would detract from the appearance of the overall development contrary to Policies S2(A) and H2(F).

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:

