

42/2005/002

SOMERSET REDSTONE TRUST

ERECTION OF SIX DWELLINGS FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED ON SITE OF FORMER TENNIS COURTS, GATCHELL HOUSE, HONITON ROAD, TRULL.

21299/22067

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

Gatchell House lies to the south of Taunton on the Honiton Road just north of Staplehay. The site lies within the Trull Conservation Area and the trees along the road frontage are covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

Following a succession of refusals and a dismissed appeal, permission was granted in January 2004 for the demolition of the former Health and Fitness Club and its replacement with 28 dwellings for the elderly with associated support services. In July 2004 permission was granted for 10 dwellings within a walled garden at the rear. This current application adds a further 6 dwellings forward of the previously approved development wrapped around a courtyard on what is currently a tennis court.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY I would refer you to my letters dated 23rd January, 2002 and 6th September, 2000 in connection with planning applications 42/2001/0023 and 42/2000/039. I would advise you that these comments apply equally to the present application. I refer to the above mentioned planning application for a additional six dwellings within a site previously granted consent for residential development and would advise you that from a highway point of view there is no objection to this proposal. However it is imperative and I would stress that the conditions previously imposed with regard to access, parking and turning are fully complied with and discharged prior to the occupation of the six dwellings that form this latest application. WESSEX WATER The development is located within a sewered area, with foul and surface water sewers available. The developer has proposed to dispose of surface water to soakaway. It will be necessary, if required, for the developer to agree points of connection onto our systems, for the satisfactory disposal of foul flows and surface water flows generated by the proposal. The connection point can be agreed at the detailed design stage. 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 point of connection onto Wessex systems. ENGLISH HERITAGE this proposal, in conjunction with the previously approved development on the site, will contradict the inspector's decision (paragraph 51) in the previous appeal on this site. In fact this element of the scheme was specifically removed from the last proposal on this site in response to English Heritage's concerns. It will be damaging to the setting of Gatchell House, particularly in views from the north and will thereby be harmful to the conservation area in general. English Heritage accordingly objects to this scheme and recommended that it be refused.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER I've now had a chance to consider the impact on the conservation area of the six proposed units with the help of the additional cross sections provided by Novell Tullett and would make the following comments as way of objection to the proposals: (1) The landscape buffer that the site was afforded has unfortunately been degraded by the necessary tree management works which have reduced the height of the main Holm Oak tree to a skeleton tree structure approximately 6 m high. This has opened up the site considerably which along with the necessary visibility splay requirements will mean that the existing screening is poor. (2) It will be possible through a carefully designed planting of Cherry Laurel, Portugese Laurel and Holm Oak to repair the landscape screening from the nearside pavement within 3 to 5 years. However, from the far side of the road, Wyatts Field and the Gatchell Meadow opening my opinion is that it will take at least 8 to 10 years before the proposed building would be adequately screened. (3) Policy EN15 requires new development to "conserve or enhance" the character of the Conservation Area which would not be possible in the short term. However given good growth of an agreed landscape buffer I consider it might be possible to at least conserve that character in 8 to 10 years. (4) From the vantage of the Gatchell Meadow opening there is a clear impression of Gatchell House, certainly during the winter months, which provides a useful landscape setting. The proposed buildings with additional landscape screening would take away this view.

CONSERVATION OFFICER (1) principle and design acceptable; (2) 2.2 m high walls a bit claustrophobic, giving an image of a defensible/no entry space. Wall only needs to be high enough to hide cars; (3) yew hedge 2 m high will also be harsh and take at least 5 years to reach this height. Suggest faster growing softer species. (4) concrete tiles specified - I do not believe we have sanctioned their use elsewhere on the site. HOUSING OFFICER the housing service would be looking for 25% of the total numbers built. Therefore we require 1 unit plus 50% of 1 unit in the form of a commuted sum.

PARISH COUNCIL the Council approves of this application but request that no more additional units of this type are permitted on this site.

10 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- total number of units is excessive in the Conservation Area and will have a detrimental impact on the setting of Gatchell House; refuse dump and electricity sub-station too close to boundary with Gatchell Meadow; overdevelopment; traffic generation; above local plan allocation; inadequate parking; limited access if fire; loss of trees and shrubs.

8 LETTERS OF SUPPORT received. In addition the applicants have submitted a petition which shows 30 signatures in favour of the development.

POLICY CONTEXT

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy H1 Housing development will be permitted within defined limits of settlements, provided that: (A) there is safe and convenient access by bus 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. (J) on housing developments and conversions of a substantial scale a reasonable mix and balance of housing types and sizes be incorporated to cater for a range of housing needs particularly those low cost housing types which are under represented in the current stock. Policy 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.

ASSESSMENT

Development in this tennis court area has previously been resisted, including at appeal when the Inspector had concerns over the length of the terraces then proposed, particularly in relation to the long views of the site from Dipford Lane.

This scheme differs from the earlier in that there is now a significant gap shown between the previously approved building and the six dwellings proposed. Whilst English Heritage's comments are noted I do not agree that this element will have any significant impact when viewed from the north. In addition the Council's own Conservation Officer does not object in principle.

The impact upon neighbouring properties or upon highway safety have not previously been identified as issues that have warranted refusal of permission at this site, including in relation to proposals of similar scale. The proposal is not considered objectionable for these reasons.

The Council's Landscape Officer is satisfied that the conifer screen is dense enough to prevent undue impact being caused to properties in Gatchell Meadow by the electricity sub-station and bin store proposed.

Discussions have taken place to overcome the detailed concerns of both the Conservation Officer and Landscape Officer. Revised drawings are awaited.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the receipt of revised proposals addressing concerns of the Conservation Officer and Landscape Officer and amendment to S.106 agreement to provide affordable housing in accordance with the Housing Officer's observations, the Development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials, rainwater goods, mortar, landscaping, hard landscaping, levels, phasing of access

works. Notes re CDM Regs, Wessex Water, Fire Officer, compliance and construction noise.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposal respects the character and appearance of Gatchell House and its setting and will not have any adverse impact on nearby dwellings or upon the Trull Conservation Area. The proposal therefore accords with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies H1 and EN15 (Revised Deposit numbering).

Should outstanding issues not be resolved satisfactorily by the 27th April, 2005, then the Development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be REFUSED.

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: