

Planning Committee – 13 December, 2006

Report of the Development Control Manager

Miscellaneous Item

38/2006/362 Redevelopment comprising erection of 21 houses, conversion of listed building to two dwellings and conversion of main building to offices at former SCAT Annexe, Staplegrove Road, Taunton

At its meeting on 1 November, 2006 the Committee resolved to grant planning permission for this development subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement and no objections from the Conservation Officer or public raising new issues on the recently submitted plans. (Copy of report attached)

Amended plans were received on 31 October, 2006 with requested amendments to the original scheme. These plans included revisions to:- (1) changes to boundary treatments introducing more walling; (2) plans of the wall and capping detail fronting Linden Grove; (3) a street scene including the proposed gate detail along Linden Grove; (4) perspective drawings along Staplegrove Road; (5) the insertion of dummy window detail to the end wall of plot 23; (6) plans of cross sections through Linden Grove; (7) additional planting; and (8) revised roof details along the Linden Grove terrace to reflect the existing pattern of roof division opposite. The plans revised the pavement and wall height along Linden Grove to reflect more recent survey work.

The alteration to the roof height of plot 1 (8) above, was a direct result of the concerns of local residents that the proposed steps in the roofline of the proposed terrace did not reflect the pattern of the opposite side of the road. When submitted, it was noticed that, in addition to the alterations to the roof, the Linden Grove frontage had altered and reflected a greater difference in levels between the entrance to the proposed dwellings and the outside pavement. As a result the applicant had introduced up to 6 steps from the Linden Grove pavement to the terrace fronting Linden Grove.

14 LETTERS OF OBJECTION on the amended plans have been received raising the following additional points:- the amended plans introduce a flight of steps to the front of the terrace fronting onto Linden Grove that are out of keeping with the character of the Conservation Area; the terrace fronting Linden Grove looks to be elevated above the ground level; the new terrace will be elevated above the height of the terrace opposite and should be the same; the steps are contrary to disabled access legislation; the proposal lacks a cohesion and scale in keeping with the area; the proposed terrace would be set 4 m back from the highway and this would be contrary to the character of the terrace opposite; at the west, the terrace would be located under the canopy of the existing pine tree which is too close, pine needles will cause a nuisance to the occupants blocking gutters etc and the terrace foundations will damage the tree roots; houses fronting Staplegrove Road should have direct pedestrian access onto the road; new heights of buildings are not stated but they appear to be significantly higher than the existing terrace; the plans do not state the height of the dwellings and should do so.

Development Control Managers Response

Other than plot 1, the most westerly dwelling (fronting Birch Grove and not the dwellings opposite) that increases by 0.45 m, the ridge height of the terrace does not alter on the amended plans. The siting of the terrace has not altered and the planning committee has agreed its relationship to Linden Grove, the adjacent trees and Swiss Cottage; disabled access is provided at the lower level through the entrance adjacent to the parking space off Staplegrove Road.

In order to provide a fall for the drainage of the site (into Staplegrove Road) the developer is unable to lower the base level of the terrace. Recent discussions between officers and the developer have sought to reduce the difference in the levels as much as possible within these limitations. The developer is to submit further amended plans that lower the height of the terrace as much as possible, in relation to the Linden Grove frontage but this is not expected to remove the need for some steps up to the front door. Comments on these plans will be listed on the update sheet.

RECOMMENDATION

To be included on the update sheet following the submission of the amended plans.

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

CONTACT OFFICER: Mrs J Moore Tel: 356467

APPENDIX

38/2006/362

STRONGVOX LTD

REDEVELOPMENT COMPRISING ERECTION OF 21 HOUSES, CONVERSION OF LISTED BUILDING TO TWO DWELLINGS AND CONVERSION OF MAIN BUILDING TO OFFICES AT FORMER SCAT ANNEXE, STAPLEGROVE ROAD, TAUNTON

322134/125152

FULL

PROPOSAL

The existing site is approximately 0.5 hectare in area and was used for educational purposes but is currently vacant. The site has two road frontages, one facing Linden Grove and the other, main frontage, onto Staplegrove Road. It has a vehicular access off Staplegrove Road, opposite Weirfield Green.

Planning permission was refused earlier this year for the demolition of the existing school buildings and the erection of 74 flats and the conversion of two listed buildings into three dwellings. This proposal would retain the main front section of the school building and change its use into offices. The proposal would also provide 5 terraces of houses on the remainder of the site, 1 fronting Linden Grove, 2 fronting Staplegrove Road and three within the site. The existing access would be altered, widened and realigned slightly to the north with a new signal controlled junction replacing the previous pedestrian crossing. Although the site lies within walking distance of the town centre, 22 on-site parking spaces would be provided for the 21 houses and 7 spaces would be provided for the offices. The dwellings have been designed to respect the Victorian terraces of Linden Grove and although the materials are yet to be finalised it is anticipated that these will match those of the other Victorian properties as much as possible.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY formal views awaited however there appear to be some outstanding concerns over the proposed highway impact that requires further discussion with the developer. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST no objections. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY no comment. WESSEX WATER, surface and foul water sewers are available. There may be a sewer crossing the site and the applicants will need to contact Wessex water to discuss this matter. SOMERSET CONSTABULARY the proposal should seek to apply secure by design standards. ENGLISH HERITAGE the retention off the main part of the school annexe is welcomed, the design of the buildings to the rear of the annexe does not reflect its character and this should be reconsidered; the designs imitate late 19th century, early 20th century styles and will need to be competently handled details such as depths of reveals, moulding and fenestration will need careful control and greater detail ought to be conditioned.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER views on new landscape plan awaited. CONSERVATION OFFICER the elevation to Linden Grove is generally appropriate although details of the entrance gates to Linden Grove need to be provided and details of the capping of the boundary wall made clear; given modern construction techniques we will need to be convinced that the end result will match the plans; it is therefore important to ensure that details are conditioned; artificial slate is unacceptable; slim profile windows will need to be seen to make sure they are appropriate; false chimney stacks regretted (should be real) dirth of landscape detail/private amenity space. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER no objection subject to contaminated land and construction noise conditions. DRAINAGE OFFICER whilst the applicants state there is no potential for soak ways the technical report states that there may be some potential and additional testing should, therefore take place when the buildings have been demolished. The applicant should also consider source control via a drainage pavement system for the parking areas. HOUSING OFFICER there are no contributions as the scheme is below the 25 threshold. However due to concerns over the proposed numbers on the site the applicants have agreed to make a contribution to offsite affordable housing (in the town centre). LEISURE AND RECREATION OFFICER play and active play provision must be made. French Weir Park where children's play contributions can be allocated playing field contributions are required and will help address the playing field provision in Taunton.

ELMS ESTATE GROUND ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL RESIDENTS raise the following issues:- although the proposed parking is in line with current policy these are large family dwellings and purchasers are likely to be at least 2 car households as a result there is likely to be around 24 additional and permanent parking spaces taken up on the surrounding streets plus a similar number for visitors, any consent should ensure that the office car parking is available to residents outside of working hours; the parking permit boundary needs to be redrawn to include properties fronting Linden Grove only, this appears to be the only way the existing 2 hour shoppers parking around the square will continue to be available; with the reduced scale of the development are traffic lights still required?; this will only exacerbate the existing problems of the "rat run" via Elm Grove and The Avenue; The Avenue is a dedicated cycle route into town and additional speeding traffic will increase highway danger; our preferred approach is to prohibit traffic from turning left into Staplegrove Road with a widening of the pavement across half the existing roadway failure to get the traffic right will frustrate Taunton's own strategic objectives as well as damaging the quality of life for the residents.

8 LETTERS OF OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- the proposal is likely to increase the amount of traffic using the existing "rat run" via Elm Grove and The Avenue during around one hour each morning and this needs to be addressed; the lack of affordable dwellings or single person dwellings is regretted; the proposal is likely to result in future parking problems along existing residential roads, the houses fronting Linden Grove seem not to have gardens, not family homes really; the proposed terrace along Linden Grove is too high and too close t the pavement and it is not designed in harmony with the existing; the ridge heights of the new terraces should be at least 1 m below those on the opposite side of the road; except for Swiss Cottage, all the buildings fronting Linden Grove have 8 m front gardens giving a spacious feeling to the street scene, development of the proposed terrace so close to the street will substantially change the character of the area with a visual choke to the street scene; the proposed terrace does not respect the fall in level of the existing dwellings contrary

to the character of the area; we regret that the whole of the main building could not be retained and converted, in particular the rear section with its typical Edwardian treatment of eaves and ventilators; we feel a good opportunity for compact modern design, that would enhance the conservation area will be lost, too much space is devoted to tarmac and not enough to amenity space for residents who will occupy the building; there is no plan to manage traffic and parking that has been discussed with local residents; additional on street parking will make it more difficult for existing residents to park near their houses; we are concerned that the change of use of the coach house to two dwellings with only one parking space each will result in our right of way, to the front of the coach house, being regularly blocked by parked cars stopping our access and forcing us to approach neighbours which would be time consuming and distressing, the proposed tree planting adjacent to the right of way will further reduce the width of access available to us; the end of the terrace of properties fronting Linden Grove will be adjacent to the rear boundary of our property with a ridge level approximately 4 m and would result in a loss of light to our dwelling leaving it dark and creating a depressing environment; the applicant has incorrectly addressed letters to our property and we have not been involved in any of the pre-application consultation as a result; hopefully the developers will pay attention to the detail of the buildings especially the door and window details.

1 LETTERS OF SUPPORT raising the following issues:- I welcome the intention to reinstate the recently fire damaged Scat building.

POLICY CONTEXT

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR4 - Development in Towns, Policy 9 - The Built Historic Environment, Policy 49 - Transport Requirements of New Developments.

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 - General Requirements, S2 – Design, H2 - Housing Within Classified Settlements, EN14 - Conservation Areas, EN16 - Listed Buildings.

ASSESSMENT

Planning permission was refused for a total redevelopment of this site to provide 74 flats and three dwellings. This proposal retains the front section of the original SCAT building, considered to make a positive contribution to the Staplegrove Road Conservation Area, and would change its use to offices. This use allows a flexible approach to the internal spaces enabling a positive re-use of the existing areas. Although located in a predominantly residential area the office use is not out of keeping with the educational use of the site and the education museum offices on the opposite side of Staplegrove Road. Parking for the office users is provided to the side and rear of the property. Landscape details have been requested to soften and obscure the parking areas to the side of the offices to stop them being seen from the main road and eroding the character of the Conservation Area. The Coach House is to be split into two dwellings with a vertical split and parking located to the rear. This detail is as negotiated with the Conservation Officer. Development of the remaining site comprises the erection of 21 houses, a mix of two and three storey properties designed to reflect the Victorian design characteristic of the area, especially Linden Grove to the rear. This design approach

was agreed for continuity, although the main SCAT building has a more Edwardian design. Street scenes are awaited from the developer to illustrate the relationship between the existing older, listed grade II properties along Staplegrove Road and the proposed dwellings. Careful design of the gable wall to the end property is necessary to ensure that the street scene can flow and respect the existing character. It is expected that “blind” window details will be used to achieve this. The Linden Grove properties have been carefully designed to pick up on the existing terrace opposite to the site. The roof heights will remain slightly lower than the existing terrace although the end terrace adjacent to Swiss Cottage will have a 1.7 m higher ridge height. This difference reflects the slope of the land (away from the site towards Staplegrove Road) at that point and bearing in mind that it is on the northern side of Swiss Cottage I do not consider that the impact on the amenity of the occupiers will be unacceptable. The County Highway Authority has agreed to the principal of the highway access but still have some outstanding concerns regarding the detail design. These are currently under negotiation and amended plans/details will be reported to the committee if they are necessary. The site is located in an area where a car free development would be considered appropriate if proposed. In this case the developers wish to have a minimum of 1 parking space per dwelling. This is also in line with the policy maximum of 1.5 spaces and I consider the parking proposals to be acceptable. There have been some minor concerns over the detail of the scheme and amended plans are awaited that are expected to overcome these concerns. Proposal considered acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the receipt of satisfactory highway and design details and the completion of a Section 106 agreement covering affordable housing contributions, children’s play and playing field contributions the Development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials, completion of offices, demolition and listed building conversion works prior to occupation, details of gates, timber windows, doors, external mouldings, wall capping, depth of window and door reveals, contaminated land, noise, parking, soakaway tests, surface water drainage, landscaping removal of permitted development rights for extensions and new windows.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with In accordance with Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR4, Policy 9 and Policy 49 and Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2, H2, EN14 and EN16.

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

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