

ITEM NO.

6

COMMITTEE DATE:

05/12/2011

APPLICATION NO:

11/1582/03

FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

APPLICANT:

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

PROPOSAL:

Residential development consisting of ten detached dwellings, associated parking, garages and access.

LOCATION:

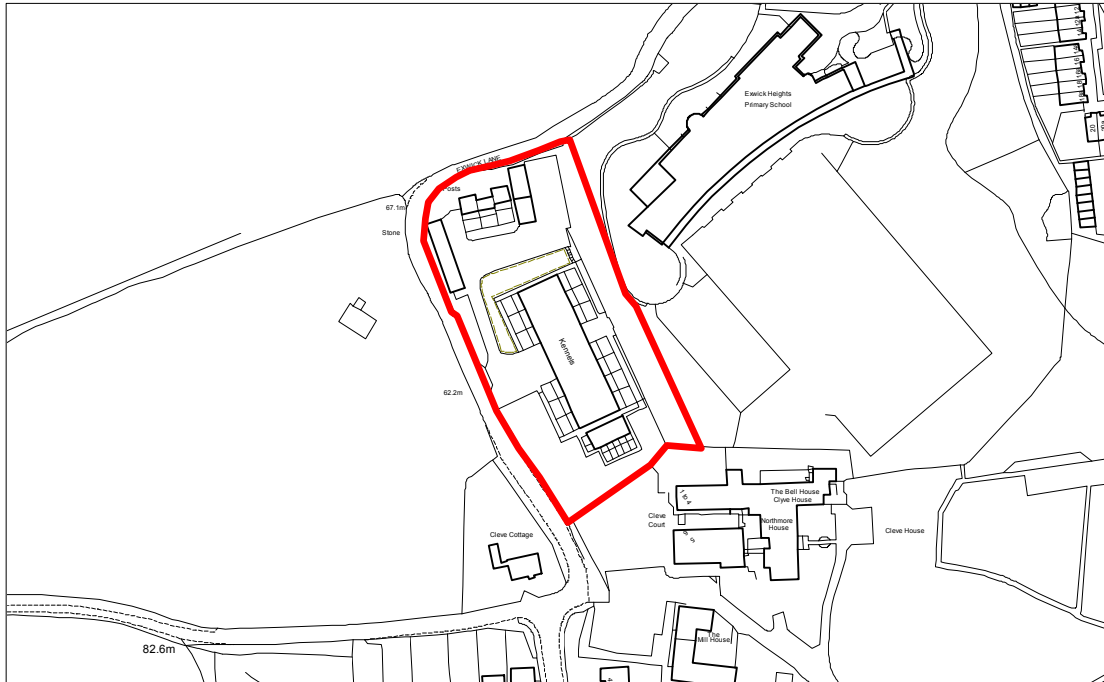
Former Guide Dogs For The Blind Kennels, Exwick Lane, Exeter, EX4 2AR

REGISTRATION DATE:

28/09/2011

EXPIRY DATE:

28/12/2011



Scale 1:2500

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HISTORY OF SITE

An outline planning application for the development of the former Guide Dogs Training Centre site was refused in September 2004 for 14 residential units (planning ref. 04/1237/01). A subsequent public inquiry was held in October 2005 and the appeal dismissed on the grounds that the proposal would be harmful to the landscape and contrary to the Exeter Local Plan Policy LS1.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The application site (0.61 ha) is located on the eastern side of Exwick Lane immediately to the western of the Exwick Heights school. The site was previously used for guide dog training purpose but has been unused for many years. It is occupied by kennels/runs, small ancillary buildings and comprises previously developed land.

It is proposed to redevelop the site for 10 detached dwellings (6 No. three bedrooms, 3 No. four bedrooms and 1 No. five bedrooms). All of the properties will have access to a single garage and parking spaces except the 5 bedroomed property which has a double garage. The properties are either single storey (3 units in total) single storey with rooms in the roof space (3 units in total) or two storey (4 units in total). All the dwellings would be constructed of brick, slate and timber windows with PV panels on the roof. The properties are arranged

around two courtyards each containing 5 dwellings. Two new vehicular accesses are to be created onto Exwick Lane, one to serve each of the courtyard schemes. The courtyards would be surfaced with a combination of granite sets and gravel bonding. A landscaping scheme has been submitted with the application.

A footway link through the site which connects Exwick Lane to the school is located to the southern end of the site.

The application has been advertised as a proposed development which does not accord with the provisions of the Adopted Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

A Design and Access Statement, Tree Survey, Ecological Survey and Landscape Appraisal have been submitted with the application.

REPRESENTATIONS

2 letters of comment/objection have been received concerned about the increase in traffic attracted to the site and the consequential need to improve Exwick Lane possibly through a new pavement link to Peterborough Road. In addition, concern is raised over the adequacy of the parking provision for the new dwellings and potential for trespassing, loss of privacy and increased noise from the users of the new footway. In respect of the latter it is suggested that a possible solution would be to relocate the footway to between the two cul de sacs. However the letters were also supportive overall of the need for redevelopment of the site as it had become an eyesore.

CONSULTATIONS

The County Director of Environment, Economy and Culture comments that unfortunately no information has been provided as a basic estimate of the volume and character of the traffic that is likely to be generated and/or attracted to this site by the proposed development. In the absence of this information, some requirements and observations are recommended, to safely accommodate proposed traffic flows, when taking the existing highway characteristics and means of access into consideration:

1) Residential development comprising ten units is likely to attract and/or generate between fifty and seventy vehicle trips per day. It is essential that public/emergency service vehicles and delivery vehicles (including e-commerce deliveries) are provided with an adequate turning/manoeuvring area to minimise excessive reversing movements. The on-site access road/courtyard areas are not adequate to accommodate the turning/manoeuvring of these vehicles and to provide this essential facility it is recommended that the northern access junction is utilised for this purpose. Unfortunately, as part of this proposal, the bollards that prohibit vehicular access along Exwick Lane are shown in a new location immediately to the north of this access. To accommodate turning at the junction, the bollards will need to be relocated approximately ten metres to the north of the location illustrated on drawing DND-03.01. To relocate the prohibition of driving area, the Traffic Order will require amendment at a cost of £1,500 which is to be secured by an appropriate agreement.

2) Visibility from and of emerging vehicles has not been provided at the junction of the southern Access Road with Exwick Lane. Visibility splays of 2.4 metres (minor road or 'x' distance) by 25 metres (major road or 'y' distance) in both directions are to be provided in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. A condition is recommended to secure the provision of this safety feature.

3) A footpath link between Exwick Lane and the School, adjacent to the southern boundary of the site is welcomed. Unfortunately, the footway is only 1.2 metres wide and the lack of adequate visibility from and of pedestrians at the access to Exwick Lane is likely to result in pedestrian/vehicular conflict. A footpath width of 2.5 to 3 metres is recommended to

accommodate pedestrian flow and a 'build out' of approximately 1.5 metres into the carriageway of Exwick Lane is recommended, as previously advised. A condition is recommended to secure the provision of these characteristics.

The Head of Environmental Health raises no objections subject to conditions in respect of hours of construction/demolition works and the submission of a contamination report.

The Police Architectural Liaison Officer comments that it is encouraging to see that the document Safer Places has been referred to within the Design and Access Statement and that further contact with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer will be sought. Detailed comments are made in respect of heights of boundary walls and gates for security and to aid natural surveillance; use of appropriate planting areas to create defensible space and prevent graffiti and loitering; and the need for additional windows to improve surveillance opportunities alongside the new footway to the school.

Strategic Planning Children's Services has requested a financial contribution of £18,180 towards education provision in Exeter.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Devon County Structure Plan 2001-2016

- ST1 - Sustainable Development
- CO6 - Quality of New Development
- TR2 - Coordination of Land Use/Travel Planning
- TR5 - Hierarchy of Modes and Transport Assessment
- TR7 - Walking and Cycling

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011

- DG1 - Objectives of Urban Design
- DG2 - Energy Conservation
- DG4 - Residential Layout and Amenity
- DG7 - Crime Prevention and Safety
- T1 - Hierarchy of Modes
- T2 - Accessibility Criteria
- T3 - Encouraging Use of Sustainable Modes
- T10 - Car Parking Standards

'Residential Guide' Supplementary Planning Document adopted September 2010.

OBSERVATIONS

The previous application for residential development of 14 units was refused and subsequently dismissed in October 2005. The primary reason for the Inspector's decision was the impact of the proposal on the landscape being contrary to Local Plan policy which seeks to retain the landscape setting of the area. The site has remain vacant and unused since this date although the new school, Exwick Heights has been built since the appeal was dismissed. It is considered that the construction of the school building has diminished the landscape value of the area and in effect the application site would now represent a rounding off of the built up area in this location. In addition, it is significant that the site has been included in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) with a predicted capacity for 18 units since the original application. The site still lies within an area designated in the Exeter Local Plan as landscape setting, as indeed was the designation for the school site. However the identification of the site within the SHLAA does represent a material consideration as it provides a firm indication of development feasibility and deliverability whilst protecting environmental assets in the City. Since the previous refusal the

applicant has sought to improve the landscape setting of the area by the removal of the leylandii hedge to the rear of the site and plant new trees on a neighbouring field which will eventually create a landscape backdrop to the site when seen from wider views. The combination of these changes since the previous appeal decision are significant and accordingly it is now considered that the principle of development for this brownfield site is appropriate. It is therefore considered that the detailed elements of the scheme in terms of layout, design, elevational treatment and highways require specific assessment.

In respect of the details, the proposal needs to be assessed against the principles contained with the Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document. The overall layout is based on the creation of two separate courtyard style developments each containing 5 detached dwellings with associated single or double garages. The northern courtyard layout, in particular, results in all properties facing inwards onto a substantial area of hardstanding which could potentially accommodate further parking if necessary. The southern courtyard layout follows a similar pattern but the inclusion of a footway link to the south of the site has resulted in Unit 10 being re-orientated to ensure natural surveillance is achieved towards this pedestrian link to the school. Whilst this does to a certain extent detract from the courtyard principle, its purpose is accepted as appropriate in this instance. Notwithstanding the appropriateness in general terms of the courtyard layout approach, it is considered that it would benefit from a reduction in the amount of hardstanding being proposed. Given the rural edge against which this site is located, it is considered that an increase in the soft landscaped element of the layout is necessary both within the courtyards themselves and in particular alongside the road frontage. This would help to harmonise the new development with this section of Exwick Lane and the established green character of this area. It is therefore considered that the units closest to the road will need to be repositioned to ensure that a robust green boundary to the site is achieved and enable more of the established planting to be retained. It should be noted that some of these hedges are covered by group tree preservation order designation. It should also be noted that the creation of vehicular access into the southern courtyard will result in the removal of two oak trees protected by the TPOs. However the submitted Tree Survey does identify that these trees are in decline and it is recommended that they are substantially pruned or felled. Whilst amended plans will be sought to ensure that the overall principle of increased soft landscaping within the scheme is achieved, landscape and hedge retention conditions will provide the necessary detail and control to ensure that the scheme is appropriate to the rural characteristics of this lane.

In respect of the proposed dwellings it is noted that particular care has been given to the storey heights to ensure that they integrate successfully within the established landscape of the area. The sloping nature of the site has led to the scheme being a combination of single storey properties at the northern end of the site to full height two storey properties at the southern end. This arrangement is directly related to the slope of the site from highest point in the north to a lower point in the south. This ensured that a reasonably consistent roof arrangement is maintained when seen from wider viewpoints. The combination of roof height, spacious plots and low density at approximately 16 dwellings per hectare has produced a development which is considered respectful of the rural backdrop against which this development would be viewed. The style of dwellings is traditional which is also reflected in the choice of materials namely brick, slate and timber windows. The use of PV panels on all the properties is positively encouraged to ensure that a sustainable development is created. The proposed dwellings largely meet the internal space standards required by the Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document as do the garages, bins and cycle storage. The proposed garden areas significantly exceed the required minimum level for all the units.

The closure of the Guide Dog Training Centre and introduction of the bollards to the north of the application site has resulted in this section of Exwick Lane being effectively car free for many years. The supporting information states that when operational the training centre had the capacity for 46 parking spaces within the site. However the introduction of residential use will inevitably bring about a different pattern of car movements and numbers than previously experienced at this site. Whilst the County Highway Officer has raised no objection in

principle, the comments raised are significant and will require the submission of amended plans before the scheme can be considered acceptable. In particular, concern is raised in respect of the ability of emergency vehicles accessing the site with the current highway layout submitted. In addition, further comment is sought from the Highway officer in respect of parking congestion experienced in the roads leading up the site as a result of the new school being built and how this will affect accessibility. The Highway Officer has indicated the need to increase the width of the footway leading through the site and on the advise of the Police Liaison Officer additional windows within the side wall of Unit 9 are needed to aid natural surveillance. It is considered that the layout can be changed to meet these requests and amended plans have been requested.

In summary, whilst the principle of residential development in this location is considered acceptable there are elements which require further attention or clarification in respect of landscaping and highway matters. However subject to these issues being resolved it is considered that the application should be approved.

In addition, the development would require a £3,500 financial contribution in lieu of an appropriate assessment to off set the impact of residential development against its impact on sites of strategic nature importance as supported by Natural England.

WESTERN AREA WORKING PARTY

Members were broadly supportive of the use of this vacant site for residential use. However concern was raised in respect of vehicular access given the existing problems of parking in nearby roads close to the school. In particular Members sought reassurance that emergency vehicles would be able to access the site given the narrowness of the existing lane. Members agreed with officers that the development should ensure that the established rural character of the area was maintained.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to receipt of amended plans in respect of landscape and highway matters, suitable conditions and the completion of a Section 106 Agreement which requires a financial contribution to education (£18,010), traffic orders (£1,500) and Natura 2000 (£3,500), the application should be APPROVED.

In the event that the Section 106 Agreement is not completed within 6 months of the date of this committee meeting, authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control to REFUSE permission for the reason that inadequate provision has been made for the matters which were intended to be dealt with by the Section 106 Agreement.

APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

- 1) C05 - Time Limit - Commencement
- 2) C15 - Compliance with Drawings
- 3) C17 - Submission of Materials
- 4) C35 - Landscape Scheme
- 5) C37 - Replacement Planting
- 6) C43E - Retain Hedges
- 7) C70 - Contaminated Land
- 8) C57 - Archaeological Recording

- 9) No other part of the development hereby approved shall be commenced until adequate areas shall have been made available within the site to accommodate operatives' vehicles, construction plant and materials in accordance with details that shall previously have been submitted to, agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and retained for the construction period.
Reason: To ensure that adequate facilities are available for the traffic attracted to the site during the construction period.
- 10) Construction work shall not take place outside the following times; 8am to 6pm (Mondays to Fridays); 8am to 1pm (Saturdays); nor at any time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.
Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.
- 11) Notwithstanding condition no 2, no work shall commence on site under this permission until full details of the following, as it relates to the office or residential building, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the following shall thereafter be provided in accordance with such details:
a) windows to include materials, means of opening, reveals, cills and headers;
b) external doors;
c) rainwater goods;
d) lighting;
e) treatment of boundaries;
Reason: Insufficient information has been submitted with the application and in the interests of visual amenity.
- 12) No part of the development hereby approved shall be brought into its intended use and/or occupied until the on-site cycle and operational vehicle parking facilities have been provided, surfaced and marked out in accordance with the requirements of this permission and retained for those purposes at all times.
Reason: To ensure that adequate facilities are available for the traffic attracted to the site.
- 13) Visibility splays shall be provided, laid out and maintained for that purpose at the southern site access to Exwick Lane, where the visibility splays provide intervisibility between any points on the X and Y axes at a height of 0.6 metres above the adjacent carriageway level and the distance back from the nearer edge of the carriageway of the public highway (identified as X) shall be 2.4 metres and the visibility distances along the nearer edge of the carriageway of the public highway (identified as Y) shall be 25 metres in both directions.
Reason: To provide adequate visibility from and of emerging vehicles.
- 14) No part of the development hereby approved shall be occupied until the footway that is located adjacent to the southern boundary of the site together with a visibility build out facility at the junction with Exwick Lane have been provided in accordance with details that shall previously have been submitted to, agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and retained for that purpose at all times.
Reason: To ensure that adequate facilities are available for the traffic attracted to the site, in the interests of public safety.

Local Government (Access to Information) 1985 (as amended).

Background papers used in compiling the report:

Files of planning applications available for inspection from the Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter: Telephone 01392 265223