

## **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Monday 15 January 2024

### **Present:-**

Councillor Knott (Chair)

Councillors Asvachin, Bennett, Jobson, Ketchin, Miller, Mitchell, M, Patrick, Sheridan, Vizard, Warwick and Williams, M

### **Apologies**

Councillors Hannaford and Wardle

### **Also Present**

Director of City Development, Service Lead City Development, Democratic Services Officer, Planning Solicitor, Principal Project Manager (Development) (HS) and Assistant Planning Manager (HS) and Democratic Services Officers (PMD and SLS)

Councillor Wood attended under Standing Order No 44.

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### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

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### **PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 23/0490/FUL - LAND AT SUMMERLAND STREET (BETWEEN RED LION LANE AND VERNEY STREET), EXETER**

The Principal Project Manager (Development) (HHS) presented the application for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of a 145 bedspace co-living Development (up to 6 storeys in height) and associated works.

He provided the following information:-

- The proposed development comprised the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of a five and six storey co-living residential building;
- The proposed development would feature communal facilities on the ground floor, with a further kitchen and dining space and a roof terrace at the uppermost floor, with 145 bedspaces in ensuite rooms on the first to sixth levels;
- The building was arranged with perimeter block and internal court on upper levels and a ground floor that had roof lights from the rear court to give natural light to the rearmost spaces with more active uses arranged on street frontages;
- The main entrance would be on Summerland Street with service accesses from Red Lion Lane and Verney Street;
- The application has been revised since first submitted to reduce the height by one storey and reduce the number of rooms by 22;
- Communal kitchen-diner spaces on each floor have been amalgamated to be provided at ground and uppermost floors.

Members received a presentation which included detailed location photographs, floor plans, street views and aerial views, room layouts, elevations, sustainability as well as highway, heritage and sustainability considerations. The presentation concluded with a summary of the potential benefits and harms of the project.

The application was recommended for approval subject to completion of a S106 Agreement relating to the matters identified and subject to conditions as set out in

report, but with secondary recommendation to REFUSE permission in the event the S106 Agreement was not completed within the requisite timeframe.

In response to queries from Members, the Principal Project Manager (Development) (HHS) clarified that:-

- the revised scheme reducing the height by one story was now the maximum acceptable;
- any scheme increasing height over the existing would have impact in terms of daylight;
- reducing the size (as opposed to height) of the project would only yield marginal benefits in terms of daylight;
- the NHS had been consulted but had not requested a Section 106 contribution;
- noise levels from the Unit 1 nightclub had been considered;
- the design for the submitted project had been considered;
- the type of accommodation offered by the project was not an in principle reason for refusal;
- the national guidance for affordable housing for build-to-rent schemes was 20%.

Mr Petrou, speaking against the application on behalf of Acland House residents, made the following points:-

- eight properties would see a total loss of 100% winter annual probable sunlight hours;
- no attempt had been made to mitigate the impact on light for the residents at the front of Acland House through the design of the building;
- the new development would be directly overlooking Acland House, diminishing the privacy of many of its residents;
- the height of the proposal was not in keeping with the surroundings and the lay of the land;
- there was no critical need for housing in the area; and
- the demolition of the extant buildings scheme would cause a worrying amount of noise.

Responding to questions from Members, he clarified that he was not opposed to the principle of a development on the site but that the one proposed would adversely affect Acland House residents.

Mr Ruddle, speaking in support of the application, made the following points:-

- the proposal would offer high-quality housing to young professionals, with EPC 'A' accreditation;
- there had been a rigorous consultation process, which had resulted in significant reduction in height;
- the developer acknowledged the issue around loss of daylight for Acland House residents and had, as a result, carried out detailed assessments.

He responded as follows to queries from Members:-

- the London guidance around room sizes in communal living developments was the only guidance available in the country;
- the freehold of the property was owned by Exeter City Council;
- on the issue of loss of light, mitigation was the only option;
- the development was not aimed at students;
- bathrooms would have a 'pod' configuration;
- there would be an on-site manager available 24/7;
- the opening hours for the roof garden would be decided by the

- management company;
- it was expected that the 20% of affordable housing in the development would cover different sizes and price points and not just the cheapest option;
- no surcharge to tenants would be made for the cost of the management company or use of any of the communal facilities on site; and
- the developer had currently included no definitive restriction on having more than one occupant per room.

The Director City Development made the following concluding points:-

- the developer had significantly revised the original proposal;
- the expectation was that there would be a development on the site;
- communal living did make a contribution towards addressing housing needs and was an attractive proposition to young people;
- everything rested on planning balance;
- although the ownership of the freehold was irrelevant to the professional assessment of the City Development team, it was a fact that Exeter needed such a project.

During debate, Members expressed the following views:-

- the issue around loss of daylight was overwhelming;
- any building of two storeys would have an impact on daylight for Acland House residents;
- no detailed analysis had been provided on whether such types of occupations were needed;
- the room sizes and communal spaces were inadequate;
- NHS support was noted;
- the proposed development would help workers facing difficulty in finding accommodation in Exeter;
- the emotional comments from the objector were compelling;
- the site was clearly a development site and the real question was needed to be done with such brownfield sites and how the city could be serviced;
- development of this site was envisaged at the time that neighbouring flats were built; and
- the development was sustainable.

The Chair moved the recommendation for approval which was seconded, voted upon and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** that the application for Demolition of existing buildings and the construction of a 145 bedspace co-living Development (up to 6 storeys in height) and associated works be **APPROVED** subject to completion of a S106 Agreement relating to the matters identified and subject to conditions as set out in the report.

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### **PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 22/1548/FUL - EXELAND HOUSE, TUDOR STREET, EXETER**

The Service Lead - City Development presented the application for Renovation, conversion and change of use from retail unit and office to form a co-living scheme of thirty-four units including communal facilities and a co-working office space, front extension with four floors, link building, public plaza on the existing car park and renovation of existing bridge link to New Bridge Street.

He provided the following information:-

- The application sought full planning permission for the change of use and extension of Exeland House to provide co-living accommodation;
- The proposals would convert the existing Exeland House into sixteen residential rooms across three floors, retaining the building's exterior. New window openings would be formed internally between existing windows. Dormer windows were proposed to the rear roof slope;
- A part three, part four storey extension was proposed to the front of Exeland House. This would be linked to the existing building via a new glazed atrium entrance. The extension would provide a further eighteen co-living rooms
- The residential floors would be grouped into six clusters, each having a communal kitchen;
- The extension would have a red brick facade and use traditional proportions. The top floor would be set back and finished in standing seam zinc cladding. The proposed extension aimed to respect the scale of adjacent buildings and provide a transition between Exeland House and the more contemporary Frog Street development;
- The existing frontage would be re-landscaped to provide a new public plaza, residents' cycle parking and co-working office accommodation on the ground floor. Vehicular access would be maintained via Hick's Court at the rear.

Members received a presentation which included detailed location photographs, the existing site plan, street views and aerial views, historic streetscapes, the isometric view, room layouts, elevations, proposed site plan, the New Bridge Street entrance, floor plans and various illustrative views. The presentation was concluded with a summary of key issues as well as the full, revised recommendation. He also advised that:-

- the Environment Agency were close to withdrawing their objection; and
- if significant changes were required, the scheme would come back in front of the Committee.

The revised recommendation was for approval subject to the conditions as set out in the update sheet.

In response to queries from Members, the Service Lead - City Development clarified that:-

- there would be a vehicular right of way across the site but no dedicated bay was planned for deliveries and emergency vehicles;
- the average room size was 19sqm;
- Historic England has praised the modern element of the project; and
- cycle parking and electric bike charging were compliant with Exeter City Council standards.

No objectors had registered to speak at the meeting.

Mr Collar, speaking in support of the application, made the following points:-

- discussions had been taking place for years with the Service Lead - City Development and Historic England;
- the location was highly sustainable for a co-living scheme;
- he expected the Environment Agency to withdraw their objection imminently;
- there would be no bedrooms on the ground floor;
- there would be a kitchen and lounge for every six bedrooms; and

- a layby would be available for delivery and emergency vehicles to park.

He responded as follows to queries from Members:-

- affordability across the spectrum of rooms could be negotiated as part of the Section 106 agreement;
- the layby contained a single bay which could host a lorry-sized vehicle;
- there was also a disabled parking bay;
- the concierge service – intended to be available 24/7 - would alleviate police concerns;
- there would be no cooking facilities inside the rooms; and
- the specific glazed features outside the concierge area would deter rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour.

The Director City Development made the following concluding points:-

- this was a well-considered scheme responding to very exacting requirements from Historic England;
- the Environment Agency did not have any concerns in principle;
- any significant changes to the scheme would result in it being brought back to the Committee;
- many issues and concerns could be addressed in the Section 106 agreement; and
- regardless of personal considerations about the type of accommodation, the proposed development did meet a need in the city.

During debate, Members expressed the following views:-

the scheme would suit car-free living;  
 the design of the scheme would improve the area;  
 some of the concerns raised by the police remained and could possibly be addressed by the Section 106 agreement;  
 co-living had strict rules, which would facilitate eviction in case of rule-breaking;  
 no objections had been received from ward Councillors;  
 loss of privacy was the only contentious element to the scheme; and  
 the design of the proposed development had risen to the challenge.

The Chair moved the recommendation for approval which was seconded, voted upon and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** that planning permission for renovation, conversion and change of use from retail unit and office to form a co-living scheme of thirty-four units including communal facilities and a co-working office space, front extension with four floors, link building, public plaza on the existing car park and renovation of existing bridge link to New Bridge Street be **APPROVED** subject to completion of a S106 Agreement relating to the matters identified and subject to conditions as set out in the update sheet.

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**PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 22/1223/FUL - 58 MAIN ROAD, PINHOE, EXETER**

The Assistant Service Lead - City Development (HSS) presented the application for replacement of existing garage, forecourt and retail units with a mixed-use development including residential and commercial (revised plans).

She reminded Members of the planning history for the scheme and provided the following information:-

- The proposal included ground floor commercial use and would provide residential development in close proximity to local amenities such as shops and schools;
- The proposal was for a two-and-a-half-storey development consisting of 1 no 4-bedroom dwellinghouse, 4 no. 2-bedroom flats and 4 no. 1-bedroom flats, 447.82sqm of commercial development and associated landscaping and parking for the commercial use;
- The site was situated within an eight-minute walking distance of Pinhoe railway station and within a fourteen-minute walking distance of a large supermarket.

Members received a presentation which included detailed location and existing site photographs, floor plans, back to back distances, proposed sections, street views and aerial views, elevations, landscaping as well as neighbour consultation. The presentation concluded with a summary of the proposed uses for the various components of the development.

The application was recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out in the report.

In response to queries from Members, the Assistant Service Lead - City Development (HSS) clarified that:-

- the house had parking facilities;
- the proposal had originally been presented to a Delegation Briefing but referred to the Planning Committee because of concerns from Devon County Council Highways;
- the mature ash tree would be removed after a tree officer had assessed that it suffered from ash dieback;
- the landscape conditions could be negotiated;
- there were no plans to set the buildings back as the proposal had already been revised; and
- there would be 10 cycle parking spaces for eight dwellings.

Speaking under Standing Order 44, Councillor Duncan Wood made the following points:-

- the site was prominent in Pinhoe and was currently unattractive;
- as a brownfield site, the location was suitable for development;
- condition #13 in the recommendation failed to mention the approved business hours for the commercial properties;
- some of the current businesses on the site caused heavy car use;
- it was not strictly true that this was a zero-car development;
- parking was currently at a premium in Pinhoe and the proposed development could make the situation even more difficult;
- two driveways in the proposed development led to a tight curved road, which was concerning;
- the house inset instead of aligned with the other properties in the development;
- the food kiosk was not a walk-past facility and customers required parking.

The Assistant Service Lead - City Development (HSS) explained that there was a layby and that the new proposal would make parking in the tight curved road more difficult.

Cllr Wood responded as follows to queries from Members:-

- although this was the best proposal he had seen for this site, illegal parking

- would increase as a result;
- there was a private car park nearby, where people could park for one hour for free;
- the concept of the proposal was good but required better public transport options; and
- there was no guarantee that people moving into the development wouldn't want to use the car.

Mr Collar, speaking in support of the application, made the following points:-

- as a Pinhoe resident himself, he felt strongly about the unattractive nature of the site in its current state;
- the boundaries of the existing site were particularly poor;
- the back-to-back distances were acceptable as the angle of the properties backing onto each other was 45 degrees;
- the house was set back slightly so as to create some defensible space against the main road; and
- the proposal would make the site an example of a sustainable location.

He responded as follows to queries from Members:-

- he would consider moving the house if its location was a ground for refusal;
- the site seemed like an ideal location for car-free living; and
- he was unsure whether there would be a communal back passage.

During debate, Members expressed the following views:-

- there was no reason not to approve the scheme;
- the supporter had given solid answers to probing questions;
- some concerns remained about the Langaton Rd entrance;
- the scheme would deliver much needed flats in the area; and
- other options were available in Pinhoe for people who were determined to drive.

The Chair moved the recommendation for approval which was seconded, voted upon and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** that the application for replacement of existing garage, forecourt and retail units with a mixed-use development including residential and commercial (revised plans) be **APPROVED**, subject to the conditions as set out in the report.

## 5 LIST OF DECISIONS MADE AND WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS

The report of the City Development Manager was submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## 6 APPEALS REPORT

The Director City Development advised that there was a slight inaccuracy in the report, namely that, while the appeal for 22/1177/FUL Land Adjacent to Gras Lawn and Fleming Way had been allowed, costs had not been awarded. Further details would be provided at the earliest opportunity.

The schedule of appeal decisions and appeals lodged was submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.31 pm)

Chair

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