

ITEM NO.

8

COMMITTEE DATE:

29/10/2012

APPLICATION NO:

11/1922/03

FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

APPLICANT:

YHA (England & Wales) Ltd.

PROPOSAL:

Change of use and conversion of Youth Hostel to 10 self contained apartments and 1 dwelling, alterations to access and highway, alterations to roof, parking and associated works

LOCATION:

Mount Wear House, 47-49 Countess Wear Road, Exeter, EX2 6LR

REGISTRATION DATE:

02/12/2011

EXPIRY DATE:

02/03/2012



Scale 1:2500

This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Exeter City Council 100049053

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The proposal relates to a large detached Grade II Listed Building, which is currently occupied by the Youth Hostel Association. The building is situated on land that overlooks the Exe estuary. The original part of the building, which was L-shaped, was constructed in the late seventeenth century. It is brick built but was given a plaster and stucco finish in the eighteenth century. In the late nineteenth century, the property was extended eastwards, with a ground floor and two storey extension, to create a Z-shape. Subsequently, the property has been subjected to a range of unsympathetic alterations and extensions, which have been harmful to the overall historic character and appearance of the building. Notwithstanding this, the building retains some features of historic interest. Externally, the north (front) elevation, which contains the oldest parts of the house, is particularly noteworthy with its modillion cornice, rusticated quoins and plasterwork and central decorative feature. Internally, the rooms of most significance are on the ground floor of the original part of the building. Here can be found 18th century panelling and corning as well as various window shutters, architraves and coving. Elsewhere, only fragments of historic interest remain.

There are a number of other buildings within the site of Mount Wear House. At the rear, there is an 18th century dwelling with various later extensions. It is now known as the Manager's

House. To the north, the property adjoins a barn containing some cob walling and a cobbled floor. To the south, it adjoins a stable.

One other building of note is the Coach House, which is located on the boundary with No. 51 Countess Wear Road and is just beyond the gate pillared entrance to the Youth Hostel site. This retains some cob walling at the rear.

The area outside the north elevation of the main property is given over to grass and some limited landscaping. The remainder of the site largely consists of hard surfacing.

This application seeks planning permission to alter and change the use of the main building to 10 self-contained flats. Various alterations are also proposed to the Manager's House. The Coach House will be converted to a bicycle and bin store.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

A Design and Access Statement is enclosed with the application. The main points to note are:-

- The conversion will create five one-bedroom apartments, four two-bedroom apartments and one three-bedroom apartment. The existing detached manager's cottage will be retained to form a four-bedroom dwelling.
- The modern single storey extension on the southern elevation will be removed and replaced with a splayed boundary wall to match existing. This will improve the appearance of the building and markedly increase the vehicular egress visibility to the north. The porch will also be removed.
- On the manager's cottage, the flat roof extension, porch, conservatory, timber storage shed and greenhouse will be removed.
- The existing cluttered roof arrangement on the oldest part of the building will be altered and simplified. The two storey flat roof extension on the south elevation will be given a duo-pitch. Various repairs and renovations will be undertaken to roofs across the site using natural slates.
- Guttering in poor condition and plastic guttering will be replaced with black cast-iron guttering.
- Repairs and renovations to rendering will be undertaken where necessary. All external walls will have stipple-finish render to match the oldest parts of the building.
- Windows in poor condition and uPVC windows will be replaced with traditional timber windows. New and replacement doors will also be in a traditional timber style.
- 17 car parking spaces and 1 garage are provided. Adequate on-site vehicle turning, manoeuvring and passing areas have been provided. Just beyond the site access, a widening of the on-site access drive has been provided to enable two vehicles to pass in opposite directions without the need for the incoming vehicle to reverse onto the public highway.
- A generous shared amenity space is provided in the northern garden area. The cottage will retain its own garden space.
- Bin and bicycle storage facilities are provided in the existing coach house.

Other documents submitted with the application include:-

Access Statement - This considers the implications of the development on the highway. It is considered that the proposed use would not generate a significantly larger amount of traffic than the Youth Hostel. Indeed, the proposed use would be less likely to attract larger vehicles to the site such as coaches and mini-buses. Highway safety would be enhanced by means of a formal priority system on the road and the introduction of visibility splays at the site entrance.

Statement of Heritage Assets - This details the history of the building and sets out features of historic note across the site.

Wildlife Survey Report - A survey was carried out in September 2010. No evidence was found to suggest that bats are roosting on the site. However, there are potential roost areas that could be used by crevice dwelling bats. Therefore, it is recommended that further survey work is carried out prior to any works proceeding. Some mitigation and enhancement measures are recommended. In respect of birds, some housemartins activity was identified on site. Works to the building should be carried out between end of September and end of February to avoid the breeding season. Mitigation and enhancement measures, including provision of swift boxes and sparrow terraces, are recommended.

REPRESENTATIONS

4 representations received. The main matters raised are:-

- It is important to ensure there is adequate on-site parking for 22 vehicles (2 spaces per flat).
- It is necessary to prevent access to Countess Wear Road from Bridge Road in order to address traffic problems in the road.
- The proposed narrowing of the road would restrict vision of approaching traffic and increase highway dangers in this area.
- The road would not meet the recommended width as advised by the local Fire Officer.
- It is odd to give priority to those heading towards School Lane as the majority of traffic flows in the opposite direction. This will further encourage those who continue to enter Countess Wear Road illegally from the bypass.
- The proposal will create additional parking problems for existing residents.
- To maintain privacy and quiet at No. 51 Countess Wear Road, there should be an additional line of noise reducing fencing adjacent to the parking spaces shown alongside the garden boundary.
- The building to be demolished next to the building named 'Bicycle Store' provides the current walled boundary between the Youth Hostel and 51 Countess Wear Road. The replacement boundary needs to be of at least the existing standard and needs to be agreed with the owners of 51 Countess Wear Road.
- The safety arrangements during the demolition need to be robust.
- The boundary walls that form a direct boundary with 51 Countess Wear Road must not have any windows overlooking the neighbouring garden.

The Wear United Community Centre Co-Ordinator requests a contribution towards a community centre project in the area.

CONSULTATIONS

The County Director Planning, Transport and Environment supports the proposals to improve visibility by removing an existing single storey extension and creating a narrowing of the carriageway on the Countess Wear Road frontage with a priority traffic flow system. It is recommended that these off-site facilities are secured through a Section 106/278 agreement. During the construction of these facilities, the one-way restriction at the southern end of Countess Wear Road may need to be suspended temporarily to permit access to residents from Bridge Road. The on-site parking provision and cycle storage facilities are also considered acceptable. Three conditions are recommended relating to the visibility splay and to ensuring that adequate on-site areas are available for operatives' vehicles, construction plant and materials.

The Council's Environmental Health team suggests a condition on any approval relating to hours of construction.

The Council's Projects and Business Manager objects to the application as Policy T3 of the Exeter Local Plan requires that storage for 13 bicycles should be provided. Only 11 are provided here. He considers that the proposed store should be able to accommodate 12 bicycles. Separate provision should be provided for the Manager's House. The proposed build-out into the carriageway needs to be designed so as to be usable by pedestrians, with a dropped kerb at either end.

The Council's Recycling Officer is concerned that the space in the bin store might not be adequate. The bins would need to be stored around the edges of the building so that they could be accessed at all times. The doors must be wide enough to get the bins out easily and the access must be flush with the ground.

The Council's Archaeology Officer recommends that a condition is added to any approval to ensure archaeological recording is carried out during the construction/conversion phase.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Central Government Guidance - National Planning Policy Framework

Devon County Structure Plan 2001-2016

CO6 - Quality of New Development

CO7 - Historic Settlements and Buildings

TR10 - Strategic Road Network and Roadside Service Areas

Exeter Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Development Plan Document

CP17 - Design and Local Distinctiveness

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011

H1 - Search Sequence

H2 - Location Priorities

T1 - Hierarchy of Modes

T2 - Accessibility Criteria

T3 - Encouraging Use of Sustainable Modes

T10 - Car Parking Standards

C2 - Listed Buildings

C5 - Archaeology

DG1 - Objectives of Urban Design

DG4 - Residential Layout and Amenity

Exeter City Council Supplementary Planning Document

Residential Design

Planning Obligations

Affordable Housing

OBSERVATIONS

The proposal relates to the conversion of the existing Youth Hostel into 10 self contained residential units. The building is located within a predominantly residential area and accordingly the principle of residential development is considered appropriate. The principal issues are therefore the impact of the conversion on the historic fabric of this Grade II listed building, the compliance of the rooms with the Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document and the impact of the proposal on the existing highway network in this location. The application was initially subject to the provision of affordable housing but given recent changes to the Affordable Housing SPD this requirement is no longer applicable as the proposed number of units is less than 15.

This planning application has not been accompanied by a listed building application which would be required to carry out the building works for conversion. However the proposal has been assessed in terms of its impact on the internal fabric of the listed building and the Conservation officer has been involved with detailed discussions with the agent to ensure that the works are appropriate. Whilst the original scheme submitted in December 2011 was

considered to be unacceptable, subsequent discussions have resulted in significant changes which, in principle, resulted in an appropriate scheme in respect to the physical changes to the internal arrangement of the building. Clearly the listed building application will enable more specific issues to be identified and may require the imposition of more detailed conditions.

The application has been assessed against the Residential Design SPD in terms of both internal and external standards. It is recognised that the scheme as revised still falls short of some of the standards identified in the Residential Design SPD to achieve good amenity standards for future residents. However it is accepted that conversion of buildings provides more limited opportunity to meet all the stated standards and also the specific requirements of the listed building status represent a significant factor in this consideration. Consequently, in this instance, it is considered that the proposed makes the most appropriate use of the available space for the specified number of units without compromising the integrity of the listed building. In respect of the external space provided it is noted that there is a shortfall of amenity provision which is presented on a communal basis. However it is considered that the provision of communal space is preferable in respect of the setting of the listed building and given that no additional space is available within the site, this shortfall is not considered of such a level to warrant refusal.

Local residents have highlighted concerns regarding that the existing Youth Hostel's access to Countess Wear Road which has restricted visibility for and of emerging vehicles in the northerly direction. The County Director Planning, Transport and Environment state that to accommodate the domestic traffic that the proposed development is likely to generate and/or attract to this site, improvements to visibility need to be incorporated in the scheme by removing an existing single storey extension and creating a narrowing of the carriageway on the Countess Wear Road frontage with a priority traffic flow system. The introduction of these visibility improvements together with a traffic priority system is acceptable from a highway view and it is recommended that the provision of these off-site facilities is secured by a Section 106 Agreement. In addition, the on-site parking provision comprising seventeen spaces (one allocated space per flat and one visitor space per two flats and two spaces for the cottage) together with cycle parking facilities complies with current recommendations for this area of the City and is acceptable from a highway view. A condition is recommended to secure the provision of the parking facilities before the occupation of each residential unit. In response to the issue raised from local residents regarding the inability of the road to accommodate a fire engine, further clarification is required and Members will be updated at the Committee.

In summary, it is considered that the proposed change of use represent an appropriate conversion of the building and will ensure that the future fabric of this listed building is safeguarded. The scheme has been subject to detailed negotiation between officers and the agent to achieve an acceptable scheme. A Section 106 Agreement will be required to promote a financial contribution towards Natura 2000 (£3500), indoor sports facilities contribution (£6740) and Community facilities contribution (£6250) and to provide the off site highway works as identified by the County Director Planning, Transport and Environment. Accordingly it is considered that the application should be approved.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement securing Natura 2000 contribution, indoor sports facilities contribution and community facilities contribution and off site highway works, and subject to the following conditions:

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 Assistant Director, City Development to REFUSE permission for the reason that inadequate provision has been made for the matters which were intended to be dealt within 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) C57 - Archaeological Recording
- 7) A visibility splay shall be provided, laid out and maintained for that purpose at the access to Countess Wear Road where the visibility splay provides 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 17.8 metres in a northerly direction.
Reason: To provide visibility from and of emerging vehicles.
- 8) No part of the development hereby approved shall be occupied until the access to Countess Wear Road, visibility splay and on-site parking facilities have been provided and marked out in accordance with details that shall previously have been submitted to, agreed and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority and retained for those purposes at all times.
Reason: To ensure that adequate facilities are available for the traffic attracted to the site.
- 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 period of construction works.
Reason: To ensure that adequate facilities are available for the construction traffic attracted to the site, in the interest of public safety.
- 10) No construction work shall be undertaken, or machinery operated, within the site outside the hours of 0800 to 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays, 0800 to 1300hrs on Saturdays, nor at any time on Sundays or public holidays without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.
Reason: In the interests of the residential amenity of the occupants of surrounding property.

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