

ITEM NO.

6

COMMITTEE DATE:

14/01/2013

APPLICATION NO:

12/1488/03

FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

APPLICANT:

Mr C Laing

PROPOSAL:

Detached dwelling, parking and associated works

LOCATION:

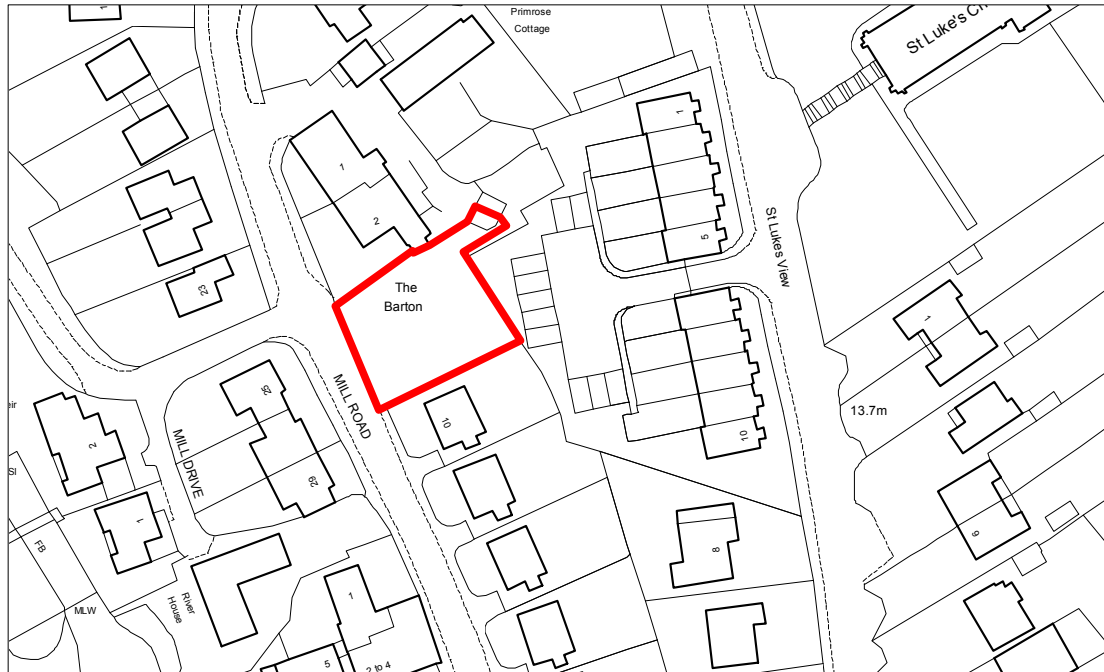
3 The Barton, Mill Road, Exeter, EX2 6LJ

REGISTRATION DATE:

24/10/2012

EXPIRY DATE:

19/12/2012



Scale 1:1250

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HISTORY OF SITE

- | | | | |
|--------------|--|-----|------------|
| 10/1659/03 - | Ground floor extension and decking on south west elevation | PER | 22/12/2010 |
| 11/1098/03 - | Redevelopment to provide detached dwelling, parking and associated works | PER | 17/10/2011 |

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The application relates to a vacant site situated on raised land behind a stone retaining wall and landscaping above Mill Road. The site is accessed via a small narrow private access lane off Mill Road, which is shared with three other properties, namely 1 and 2 The Barton and Primrose Cottage. The access lane contains a number of garages.

1 and 2 The Barton are Grade II listed buildings. The proposed dwelling will be located on land adjacent to No. 2. Detached, it will provide an integral garage, family living accommodation, a study and utility at ground floor and four bedrooms (two en-suite) with a family bathroom at first floor level.

Planning consent was granted in 2011 (Application 11/1098/03) for the demolition of an existing building (now complete) and construction of a detached two-storey four-bed dwelling.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

Design and Access Statement: planning consent was granted for a dwelling during 2011. This application also seeks a two-storey four-bed detached dwelling but to a more modern design. The proposed dwelling sits largely on the same footprint as the approved design. Care has been taken to avoid overlooking. To soften the modernistic cube shape of the building, the first floor will be timber-clad whilst the ground floor will be white render. The scale of the building is appropriate to the setting.

REPRESENTATIONS

3 letters of objection:

- The design is unsympathetic to the location. There is a continuous thread of design that has been applied to all the surrounding houses. This proposed build offers little or no consideration to these buildings.
- This is a dominant site with far reaching views.
- The materials, fenestration and flat roof line produce a harsh and sharp contrast with the listed building.
- The building will sit closer to the road in an elevated and dominant position.
- Ensure the current height and depth of foliage are maintained. Do not allow close board fence as it will be prominent and stark.
- Ensure no vehicles, skips etc are parked along the frontage or opposite 19, 21, and 23 as this is the narrowest part and makes passing difficult.

1 letter including the following comments:

- Ensure hours of construction / demolition are restricted to certain hours.
- The manhole shown on the plans does not exist. The existing foul sewer system can not take more.

CONSULTATIONS

Environmental Health: approve subject to a condition relating to hours of construction.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Central Government Guidance
NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy
CP17 - Design and Local Distinctiveness

Devon County Structure Plan 2001-2016
CO6 - Quality of New Development
CO7 - Historic Settlements and Buildings
ST1 - Sustainable Development

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011
DG1 - Objectives of Urban Design
DG4 - Residential Layout and Amenity

Exeter City Council Supplementary Planning Document
Residential Design Guide (adopted September 2010)

OBSERVATIONS

The Council, as endorsed by the previous planning consent of 2011, has no objection to the principle of a two-storey building in this location. In August 2012 pre-application drawings

were presented to the Council for comment. The proposal presented was for a modernist cube shaped building. However, there have been a number of concerns about this specific proposal regarding its design. One of the key matters with any new or replacement dwelling is to ensure that its overall height, size and massing is appropriate to the local townscape. Pre-application advice was provided indicating that the cube shape of the building was an improvement in terms of the height and setting of the neighbouring listed and unlisted buildings but that this was not the location for a 'white box'. A more appropriate colour could be found for the render and the boarding would require further consideration. The design was noted as being more contemporary and the elevations un-fussy. Following that advice the current planning application was submitted.

The Conservation Officer has advised that the scale is preferable to the previous scheme, which was overly large on the site and would have a damaging impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings. A flat roof structure enables the size of the proposed dwelling to be kept to the minimum, thereby reducing its impact. However, the materials are inappropriate for the location; a minimalist "white box" would be incongruous and more sympathetic materials should be employed in order to enable the building to blend in. A similar scale and design of building could be constructed in red brick with a parapet detail; this would be more in keeping with its neighbours and the locality. The fenestration is poorly detailed and also needs reconsidering in order to complement the surroundings. The 1.8m close boarded fence proposed on the SW boundary would be an incongruous feature in the street scene as it is above a substantial wall. The hedge feature should be retained and if any further measures are required for security/safety, then something should be placed within the site, so it is not visible from the road.

Following presentation to the Southern Area Working Party (SAWP) in November 2012, revisions to the initial submission were made to the roof line, footprint and detailing of the fenestration. The revision to the roof line of the building was to bring some relief to its form. However, it is still considered that the proposal does not reflect the sensitivities of the site. The site is in an elevated position above Mill Road that slopes down in a southerly direction towards the junction with Shepherd's Hill. The neighbouring properties Nos. 2 and 10 reflect this gradient change, properties towards the northern end of Mill Road being higher than those to the south. The amendments made to the roof line of the building include it being raised at the southern end. The proposed roof line should step down (north to south) rather than up, to reflect the wider setting, contours and relationship with the neighbouring properties. The revised roofline works at odds to the wider context and as a result does not sit comfortably within the street scene. The agent, in correspondence dated 6 December 2012, is at pains to point out that *'there is a sharp drop in level with a retaining wall to 10 Mill Road. To design a building that slopes down towards No. 10 would be to contrive the plan as it is not reflected in the ground levels. However, the proposed plans have a lower roof line than No. 2 The Barton and this does give an element of stepping down from No 2 The Barton to 10 Mill Road'*. Whilst the highest part of the roof may be lower than that of No. 2, the building still does not reflect the contours of its wider setting or its relationship with neighbouring buildings.

Nos. 1 and 2 The Barton are Grade II Listed Buildings characterised by their red brick construction and the positive contribution they make to the townscape. The proposed building is within the grounds of No. 2 and its impact on the setting of this Listed Building will be significant. The design, detailing and materials take very little reference from the wider context and as a result do little to enhance it or the setting of the Listed Buildings. Pre-application advice indicated that *'the boarding will require further consideration'*. In subsequent meetings, grave concerns were voiced by officers regarding its inclusion in the scheme. It is not appropriate in this location and whilst there may be some evidence of this material in the area, it should not set a precedent for more. The agent has stated that the *'timber cladding was introduced to avoid the building being a "white box". The timber which would weather to a light grey would soften the appearance and the whole design is less assertive than the glazed gable on the approved design which is also to be clad in timber. However, the timber could be replaced with dark coloured render'*. Whilst timber may form

part of the existing planning consent (with an element of timber being included on the two storey front gable) the scheme presented through this application does not have a 'quiet design', the building being prominent and distinctive. The choice of materials becomes all the more important both in their own right and in respect of the setting of the Listed Buildings. Combined with the design of the building, the timber cladding is considered inappropriate. *The agent states 'Nos 1 and 2 The Barton are both brick and rendered with gables, rear elevation and new extension in render painted white. There are also other rendered buildings along Mill Road and therefore this material is sympathetic to its setting'.* Render as a building material is acceptable. However, combined with the uncompromising nature of the design the white render proposed enhances the already 'loud design' of the scheme that does not sit comfortably in the street scene.

Throughout the pre-application discussions and subsequent negotiations, concerns have been expressed regarding the uncompromising nature of the design. Whilst the height, scale and massing of the proposal is an improvement on the existing planning consent, concerns regarding the design remain. Changes have been made to the roof line and fenestration to 'soften' it. However, drawing the front elevation forward by 0.6m, altering the roof line (at odds to the contours of the wider setting) and the changes to the fenestration do not go far enough to allow the building to sit comfortably in its context. Pre application advice indicated that this was not the location for a 'white box'. Those comments (in the form of the proposal presented) remain. A contemporary building is not objectionable in principle. However, in the proposal submitted there is no reference to its context - the building appearing in stark contrast to all around it. The agent in correspondence states that *'it seems from your comments that you are looking for a building that is some form of pastiche. In my opinion a strong contrast in styles adds variety to a street scene and often a modernistic building works better against listed buildings than a building which "apes" its style'.* At no point has a pastiche design been encouraged. As outlined above, there is no objection to a contemporary building, but it is considered that, in the form presented, the building would not enhance the character or appearance of the townscape.

In assessing this application, the main policy considerations have been considered and whilst the proposal supports Policy H1, H2, T1, T2, T3 and T10 of the Exeter Local Plan and the requirements of the Residential Design SPD, it is contrary to Policy DG1, which states that development should be appropriate to the surrounding townscape and should relate well to adjoining buildings. All designs are expected to promote local distinctiveness, contribute positively to the visual richness of the area, integrate into the existing landscape of the city and use materials that relate well to the palette of materials in the locality. Policy C2 emphasises the importance of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

Concerns have been raised through letters of objection (and in the report to the former planning consent) to potential problems arising during any construction phase. Mill Road is a narrow road that would struggle to accommodate a number of large vehicles, particularly without blocking access, including to a number of private drives and causing conflict between neighbours. Policy TR10 of the Devon Structure Plan makes it clear that development proposals should not adversely affect the road network in terms of traffic and road safety. At present, this application contains no information to demonstrate that this proposal would satisfy this requirement. A Method Statement is required to show how the works would be carried out without compromising highway safety or creating highway obstructions.

Finally, the impact of the proposal on neighbouring occupiers (aside from the concerns raised in the previous paragraph on the construction phase) would not appear to have any significant harm. The footprint of the building is not significantly different from that granted consent and all windows would be positioned so as not to face directly into adjacent properties.

A 1.8m high close board fence is proposed on the boundary of the site with the No. 10. It would be clearly visible in its elevated position (from down Mill Road) and would not make a

positive contribution to the character or appearance of the townscape. If the application were to be approved a condition requiring a brick boundary treatment should be applied.

SOUTHERN AREA WORKING PARTY

The application was originally presented to SAWP in November 2012 with an Officer recommendation for revisions to the scheme regarding its design. As endorsed by the pre-application advice the design was considered uncompromising. It did not sit comfortably in its context or improve the setting of the neighbouring Listed Buildings. If revisions were not successful the proposal would be refused. Members were inclined to support the Officer recommendation. Although amendments to the scheme have been made, they are not considered sufficient for a recommendation of approval.

The revised application was presented again at SAWP in December 2012 with another recommendation for refusal. In considering the revised scheme, Members were inclined to support the initial submission favouring the flat roof design of the initial scheme compared to the revision.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposed development is contrary to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework concerning design, Policy CO6 of the Devon Structure Plan 2001 to 2016, Policy CP17 of the Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2012), and Policies DG1(b), (f), (g), (h) and (i) of the Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011 because by virtue of its unsympathetic design and materials the proposed dwelling would be an incongruous form of development which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

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