

Application Number

P/2010/1080/MPA

Site Address

Conway Court Hotel
Warren Road
Torquay
TQ2 5TS

Case Officer

Mrs Ruth Robinson

Ward

Cockington With Chelston

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

This application, to construct 14 flats on the site of the former Conway Court Hotel, Warren Road, has been considered on 2 previous occasions by Members.

Firstly on the 29.11.10, when the scheme was agreed in principle subject to the conclusion of a S106 agreement to secure Community Infrastructure Contributions, revised plans which set the building back by a metre and the height down by 200ml and greater clarity about design details, materials, landscaping and land stability.

It was considered again on the 10.12.12 as an objection was received in relation to the revised plans. The minutes confirmed that Members wanted the S106 determined within 6 months or the application to be reconsidered by Members.

The minutes also record that Members wanted renewable energy options to be discussed with the developer and the submission of satisfactory details in relation to design, materials, landscaping and land stability.

The previous committee report is appended below for information.

The applicant is now ready to sign the S106 and the additional details referred to have been submitted.

In terms of design detail and materials, there are some minor changes to the scheme which have been recently introduced.

These are:

- i) The inclusion of a central glass balustrade at the penthouse level contained within the depth of the projecting gable structure,
- ii) An increase in roof height of the apartment above the car park level. This is around .6 of a metre.
- iii) 'Grounding' of the plinth by extending the gable feature to the terrace level,

- iv) Extension of the rendering down to the street level along Warren Road to ground this elevation
- v) Inclusion of natural stone face to the lower 2 storeys of the seaward elevation,
- vi) Use of timber hit and miss screens to divide the fenestration along the SW elevation and to provide ventilated screening to the car park. The zinc panelling originally proposed is now shown to be fibre cement.

The use of timber hit and miss screens does need to be demonstrated to be a visually acceptable option as does the replacement of the zinc panelling with the fibre cement panels. The applicants have been asked to address this before the Decision is issued.

The floor levels have been rationalised. This involves no increase in height of the main part of the building but some minor adjustment in relation to the unit above the car park deck as explained in ii) above. This is still however within the level set by the original scheme for redevelopment of the site.

An Engineer's Report has been submitted, but is dated 2006 and pre dates the demolition of the building. This indicates the need for some further site investigation. It is proposed to deal with this additional investigation by condition.

A Landscape scheme provides a conceptual strategy for the site and is, subject to detail, an acceptable response. A condition is needed to ensure that appropriate detail is submitted and the scheme implemented.

This application is now nearly 4 years old. It was submitted on the 22nd September 2010. An urgent resolution was considered imperative when last considered by Members as the original hotel building had been largely destroyed by fire and the site was covered with debris which had attracted much complaint from neighbours to the site. It was cleared satisfactorily following service of a section 215 notice in January 2013.

However, there is a need to resolve the future of this site and it is therefore recommended that a further 3 months be allowed for the S106 to be signed and the minor outstanding design matters resolved.

Conditions are recommended in relation to 1:20 details of key features, samples of materials, implementation of bike and bin storage, species and density details to supplement conceptual landscape strategy for the site and further investigative study of ground conditions to inform foundation design.

Recommendation

Conditional Approval: subject to the conclusion of a S106 agreement within three months of the date of this meeting to achieve SPD Community Infrastructure Contributions of £31, 260, clarification of the acceptability of hit and miss timber

screening and use of fibre cement board in place of zinc panelling and conditions in relation to:

- i) 1:20 details of key features,
- ii) samples of materials,
- iii) implementation of bike and bin storage,
- iv) species and density details to supplement the conceptual landscape strategy for the site; and,
- v) further investigative study of ground conditions to inform foundation design.

Previous committee report

Site Details

Comprises a vacant former hotel occupying a prominent and sensitive location above Rock Walk and within the Belgravia Conservation Area. It comprises a two to three storey building on the Warren Road elevation extending to four/five storeys on the seaward elevation. It has been substantially extended over the years and whilst the original villa is still distinguishable by two bracketed gabled elevations with quoins, raised stucco window surrounds and sliding sash windows it is in a dilapidated state and the various extensions result in the building occupying the entire width of the plot. Originally laid out in the Victorian period, this prominent ridge development of Villas within substantial landscaped plots was characterised by a consistent skyline and a pattern of gaps between buildings. Perched above Rock Walk Gardens, which is included as a Grade II entry on the Register of Parks and Gardens, this townscape typifies Victorian Torquay.

Relevant Planning History

P/2002/1833: Demolition and erection of 13 flats: Refused 3/12/2002.

P/2004/1346: Demolition and erection of 13 flats: Refused 30/09/2004.

P/2005/1349: Demolition works Approved 5/12/2005.

P/2005/1350: Alteration and extension to create 13 flats: Approved 6/10/2005.

P/2006/1448: Alteration and extension to create 14 flats: Refused 6/10/2006.

P/2007/0089: Alteration and extension to create 14 flats: Refused 19/02/2007

P/2007/0910: Alteration and extension to create 14 flats: Approved 8/08/2007.

P/2010/0233: Demolition and redevelopment to create 14 flats: Withdrawn 23/09/2010.

Relevant Policies

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment

Saved Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011

HS Housing Strategy.

H2 New Housing on unidentified sites.

H6 Affordable Housing on unidentified sites.

H9 Layout, Design and Community Aspects.

H10 Housing Densities.
CF6 Community Infrastructure Contributions.
L8/L9 Retention of trees
TU7 Retention of Holiday accommodation outside PHAAs
BES Built Environment Strategy
BE1 Design of new development.
BE5 Policy in Conservation Areas
BE8 Historic Parks and Gardens.
T25/T26 Access/ car parking.

Proposals

Is a full application for demolition of the building and its replacement with a block containing 14 flats comprising 1 one bed flat, 12 two bed flats and 1 three bed flat. It also includes a stacked garage system for 14 cars.

Consultations

English Heritage Advise that they do not object to the loss of the building and are content with the scale and design of the latest proposals but stress that success will depend on attention to detail and materials. Their comments in relation to this, and the previously submitted scheme P/2010/0233 are attached as T.200.

Arboricultural Officer Advises that he has no objections to the scheme subject to a quality landscape scheme being agreed.

Highways Officer Has no objection to the scheme subject to further information in relation to the stacked car parking arrangements.

Strategic Transport Request £37,580 sustainable transport contribution.

The scheme was considered by the Design Review Panel at its meeting of the 4th June 2009 and their comments broadly support redevelopment of the site if it secured a replacement building that allowed the historic grain of the area to be re-established. The comments are appended at T.200.

Representations

2 letters of objection raising strong concerns about the loss of the existing building, the scale, height and appearance of the replacement building and the lack of care exercised by the current owners resulting in its current dilapidated condition. The method of car parking it is thought could be noisy and disruptive to traffic. Both would prefer to see the existing permission implemented. The letters are reproduced at T.200.

Key Issues/Material Considerations

There are 3 main issues, the loss of the existing building, the scale size and appearance of the replacement building and the garaging system and its practicality. Each will be addressed in turn.

Loss of the existing Building

The loss of this building has been resisted for many years as can be seen from the history. It has been vacant since 2002 and during this time the condition of the building has deteriorated. Permission did exist, P/2005/1350, and as amended by P/2007/0910 for its extension and conversion to provide 14 flats. These are now time expired.

PPS 5 'Planning for the Historic Environment' confirms that there is a presumption against the loss of buildings of merit within Conservation Areas unless specific tests can be met in relation to structural integrity, economic viability of repair and the appropriateness of the replacement building. This application is supported by an Historic Building Assessment which traces the evolution of development in the area, the changes to this building and assesses the heritage value of the structure and a Financial Appraisal of the viability of various options for the future development of the site. The conclusion of the Historic Building Assessment is that the villa has been extended and altered to the point that its value is compromised and that there may be scope, through an appropriately designed building to reintroduce some of the historic grain and rhythm to the townscape by a built form that allowed the reintroduction of gaps between buildings. In terms of the Financial Appraisal, six options were considered but only the scheme to redevelop the building was shown to be viable. One of the difficulties in developing the site has been the inclusion of car parking. The previously approved scheme which retained the building involved expensive underpinning to allow on site car parking within the basement of the retained villa. It was for this reason that the approved scheme was not implemented. Alternative proposals which facilitated on site car parking were far from satisfactory from a streetscape perspective and/or reduced the amount of living accommodation available to a point that rendered the scheme unviable. An option of relying only on onstreet car parking was looked at but it was considered that these would be difficult to sell and again not generate enough funds to achieve refurbishment. The only option that resulted in a viable outcome involved complete redevelopment. The test then has to be the quality of the replacement building.

Quality of the Replacement Building

The existing building has been much extended over the years and occupies the entire width of the plot. This runs counter to the original pattern of development which involved the villas being set centrally within landscaped plots producing gaps and vistas between buildings and a distinctive townscape character. The approved scheme for the site did involve retention of the historic core and redevelopment of the more recent wings to a greater height than existing which further eroded gaps. The guiding principle for redevelopment was therefore to seek to reintroduce the historic grain and this has strongly informed the design approach.

The Design Review Panel considered an early conceptual scheme and as can be seen from their comments were supportive of the approach and the benefits that could accrue. A more developed scheme was then submitted as an application which English Heritage thought was lacking in contextual sensitivity. This was subsequently withdrawn and revised proposals evolved which drew more strongly on the character of surrounding buildings. In broad terms, the design echoes the villa form in terms of features and proportions but is executed with contemporary details and materials. It comprises a 2 storey plinth level which will be in limestone and

timber and will thus read as a garden feature providing the details are properly resolved. The upper level, comprises an additional 4 stories, and introduces a more locally distinctive roof treatment with a strong gable in place of the flat roofed approach embodied in the withdrawn proposal. The seaward elevation exploits the views with a glazed façade with balconies and terraces. The windows and doors are to be in aluminium that will allow a slimmer profile to be adopted. The solid elements of the façade are to be in render with zinc cladding and metal shingles. The height and depth of the structure has been raised as a concern by neighbours. It will be taller than the existing building and will be similar in height to the adjacent Rock Walk Heights. This attracted much criticism when built as it exceeded the height of the original villa on the site and ran counter to the gradual scaling down in height of buildings in line with the topography. It will be deeper than the existing building and this will have the effect of making the new building look more imposing than the existing. However this will be offset to some degree by the reduced footprint and the gaps between this and adjacent buildings.

In terms of the Warren Road elevation, this extends to 4 stories and it is considered to satisfactorily pick up the broad character of the villa streetscape particularly now that the strong gable roof is introduced. The main concern relates to the run of garage doors which are not characteristic of the street scene and do not present an active frontage. In order to be acceptable they need to be well detailed.

The scheme now has the support of English Heritage and is considered to represent an acceptable way forward although more clarity about details and materials is still needed.

Practicality Of Car Parking Arrangements

The system selected involves a stacked garage comprising 7 spaces at ground level with 7 spaces at basement level. Concerns have been expressed about its practicality, whether people will bother to use it thus generating more on street car parking, whether it will be hazardous to highway safety given there will be a need to reverse onto the road and whether it will be noisy in operation. Highways have requested more information in terms of how this will operate and this will be reported verbally.

Developer Contributions

The scheme requires the following level of contribution towards local infrastructure:-

Waste	£ 700
Sustainable Transport	£37,580
Stronger Communities	£ 2,620
Lifelong learning	£ 5,200
Greenspace	£31,260

Sustainability – Would make more effective use of an existing urban brownfield site

Crime and Disorder –No observations received

Disability Issues – Design and access statement demonstrates compliance with regulations.

Conclusions

It is considered that a reasoned case has been made for demolition of the existing building. The Historic Building Assessment and Financial Assessment shows that the building is compromised by later additions and alterations, that options to retain the building are not viable and that this scheme, in reintroducing substantial gaps does act in a way to recreate the historic grain and rhythm of the Victorian townscape. Given the support for the proposal from English Heritage and the Design Review Panel and the continuing dereliction of the building it is considered that the benefits of redevelopment outweigh continuing attempts to find ways of retaining this building. The design is contemporary but is contextually sympathetic and subject to details and materials being shown to be of a good quality is likely to be acceptable. Landscape details are required to ensure that the setting to the building is appropriate. The stacked car parking arrangement requires further consideration in terms of its operation and can progress will be presented at the meeting.

Recommendation

Members Site Visit: Approval, with resolution of design details, materials and landscape treatment to be delegated to the Head of Spatial Planning to resolve. Subject to a S106 legal agreement in terms acceptable to the Executive Head of Spatial Planning.