

Application Number

P/2014/0501

Site Address

Lansdowne Hotel
Old Torwood Road
Torquay
Devon
TQ1 1PW

Case Officer

Mrs Helen Addison

Ward

Wellswood

Description

Demolition of existing building, construction of 14 No apartments with underground parking, revision to vehicular and pedestrian access

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

The application is to demolish the existing vacant hotel on the site and to construct a modern four storey building that would provide 14 apartments with underground parking. The proposed building would be higher than the existing building on the site, but would have a smaller footprint. The curtilage would be landscaped to provide communal grounds for the occupants.

Recommendation

Committee Site Visit: Conditional Approval; subject to the receipt of satisfactory further information relating to trees on the site and; subject to completion of a S106 agreement. The S106 agreement is to be completed by 27 August or the application shall be refused for reasons of a lack of 106 agreement.

Statutory Determination Period

This is a Major Planning Application. The 13 week target date is 27th August 2014. The S106 agreement will need to be completed on or prior to this date in order to issue the decision within the target period.

Site Details

The application site relates to a vacant hotel situated on the north side of Babbacombe Road. The hotel is in a prominent location clearly visible from Babbacombe Road. It is set back within the site and is at a higher level than Babbacombe Road. The building was originally a Victorian villa but it has been substantially extended in the past including a large two storey wing on the north side of the building. The Victorian character of the building has been largely eroded by the number of extensions that have been added to the building. Babbacombe Road abuts the southern side of the site and Old Torwood Road the western boundary. The access to the site is from Old Torwood Road.

The surrounding area is in a variety of uses. There is a restaurant on the opposite side of Old Torwood Road. Glenthorne Close is a modern cul de sac and is located on the north side of the site. There are residential properties along Babbacombe Road and a hotel close to the application site. In the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011 the site is shown as being within the Warberries Conservation Area.

Detailed Proposals

The application is for demolition of the existing building and redevelopment of the site with 14 apartments. The apartments would be in a single four storey building with underground parking at basement level. The proposed building would be sited in a similar location to the existing hotel, which would be set back within the site. The vehicular and pedestrian access would be moved further to the north of the site in comparison with the existing access, which would be further from the junction with Babbacombe Road. The main access would be from Old Torwood Road. The vehicular and pedestrian access points would be adjacent to each other. The pedestrian access would be routed through the grounds of the proposed development. There would be a number of shallow steps to the pedestrian route. In order to provide a ramped access (without steps) to the site a second gated pedestrian point of access is proposed from Glenthorne Close.

The proposed development will be laid out with four apartments on each of the ground, first and second floors. On the third floor there will be two apartments. Each apartment will have two bedrooms. The building is to have a contemporary appearance. It will pick up design elements from Victorian architecture such as the use of symmetry and vertical proportion.

The west elevation will face Babbacombe Road and have a projecting 'giant order' framing device with modular components on either side. The third storey is to be recessed behind the main building line. The proposed building will have a flat roof. The design includes a number of glazed balconies. The materials palette includes painted render and cladding panels. A limestone plinth is to be constructed around the base of the building. This would form a plinth on the western side of the building and would enable ground floor outdoor amenity space to be provided.

Windows and doors are to be dark grey aluminium. The main entrance to the building will be on the northern side (ie facing Glenthorne Close). Twenty one car parking spaces, including a disabled space, are indicated within the underground parking area. In addition a cycle store would be provided at this level. A lift is to be provided within the building that would extend down to the underground parking level. A bin store would be provided adjacent to the access onto Old Torwood Road.

A landscape concept plan has been submitted that shows the regrading of the garden to create usable amenity space for residents. This includes the provision

of a level lawn area and paved patio to allow communal activities. Large blocks of evergreen shrubs and accent planting are also proposed.

Summary Of Consultation Responses

Highways: No objection. Requests vegetation on site at the access to be cut back. Also requests a S106 sustainable transport contribution.

Police Architectural Liaison Officer: Recommends a number of design features that would reduce the risk of crime.

Arboricultural Officer: Requests submission of a tree report

Drainage: Requests details of where soakaways are to be located and details of infiltration testing. The applicant must demonstrate that surface water drainage will not result in any increased risk for flooding to properties or land adjacent to the development.

Conservation Officer: No objection to the demolition of the existing building. Advises that the proposal would be a significant improvement to the conservation area and recommends approval.

Summary Of Representations

Three letters of representation received that raise the following issues;

- Building is too high and will overshadow Glenthorne Close
- Pleased that it is not as big at ground level as the hotel at present
- Will overlook property particularly at the back and will invade privacy
- Concerned that without double yellow lines visitor parking will overflow into the Close
- Drivers will ignore the one way system, written signs are needed eg no left turn into Old Torwood Road and no exit onto the Babbacombe Road.
- Proposal should have adequate parking for occupants, visitors and deliveries.
- Old Torwood Road should be narrowed to prevent drivers in Babbacombe Road turning round
- The proposed landscaping should be undertaken and the trees etc should be planted and not forgotten

These representations have been sent electronically for Members consideration.

Relevant Planning History

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| P/2012/0112 | Redevelopment to provide 14 dwellings with vehicular and pedestrian access, demolition of existing hotel buildings. Withdrawn 2.6.14 |
| P/2011/0732 | Demolition of hotel buildings withdrawn 7.2.12 |

P/2011/0731	Demolition of hotel buildings and redevelopment to provide 14 dwellings withdrawn 7.2.12
1996/1217	First floor bedroom extension approved 3.2.97
1990/1551	First and second floor extensions to provide additional bedrooms and formation of additional parking spaces refused 23.10.90

Key Issues/Material Considerations

The main issues are the loss of a hotel use from the site, the principle of residential development in this location, whether the siting and design of the proposal would be acceptable, highways, impact on the amenity of adjoining occupiers, and S106 contributions.

Principle and Planning Policy -

Policy TU7 in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011 is relevant to redevelopment of hotels outside the Principal Holiday Accommodation Area (PHAA). This Policy sets out three criteria to assess a proposed loss of holiday accommodation.

These criteria are; firstly, whether the loss of holiday accommodation would undermine the holiday character of the locality or the range of tourism facilities in the Torbay. In this case the area around the application site does not have a distinctive holiday character. The only other holiday use in the vicinity of the site is the Burlington Hotel which is located on the opposite side of Babbacombe Road. A holiday character is more apparent further west along Babbacombe Road where there is a concentration of properties in holiday use, approaching the clock tower closer to the harbour. There is not a notable holiday character in the vicinity of the application site. It is also noted that the property has been vacant for a number of years, and therefore has not made a contribution to the tourist industry for some time. Consequently it can be concluded that the proposed change of use would not impact on the range of facilities available in Torquay.

The second criteria relates to an assessment of the significance of the holiday setting, view and relationship to tourism facilities. The application site is not significant in terms of its contribution to the tourist industry. It is located too far from the harbour and beaches to have a meaningful relationship with holiday facilities in Torquay. There are no important views from the site, and the site is not significant in terms of its setting to warrant retention of a holiday use in this location.

The third criteria relates to whether the new use would be compatible with the character and other uses in the area. The predominant use of other buildings in the area is for residential purposes and therefore the proposed use would be consistent with the established character of the area. It would be an appropriate use in this location and would contribute to providing new housing for which there

is a need in Torbay.

Guidance on the interpretation of Policies TU6 and TU7 is contained in the Council's guidance document "Revised Guidance on the interpretation of Policies TU6 (Principal Holiday Accommodation Areas) and TU7 (Holiday Accommodation elsewhere) of the Adopted Torbay Local Plan". In this guidance it is advised that for medium sized hotels (11 to 49 bedrooms) outside the PHAA residential use is likely to be allowed.

Demolition of the existing building

The proposed development would involve the demolition of the existing building. Given that this is a Conservation Area it is important to consider the principle of the loss of the existing property.

The former hotel has been substantially extended and altered and does not retain its original Victorian character. The appearance of the building does not make a positive contribution to the character of the Warberries Conservation. The Conservation Officer and a representative from English Heritage were present at the Design Review Panel Meeting. Given the existing situation and the exemplary design of the replacement building in its context, there is no objection to the demolition of the building and the redevelopment of the site in the proposed form.

Siting and design of development -

There has been considerable previous negotiation in respect of the form of development that would be acceptable on this site. It can be seen from the history that two planning applications have been submitted and withdrawn, as previous applicants were unable to devise an acceptable solution for the site. Previous schemes have included a principle building and ancillary mews type development. This resulted in a far greater level of site coverage with buildings and parking areas than is currently proposed.

The current applicant submitted a pre application enquiry prior to the submission of the planning application that was considered by both officers and the Design Review Panel (DRP). A copy of the DRP report is included with the representations. Essentially the DRP support the principle of the development. The panel endorsed the principle of developing the site with a single building and the use of underground parking. They were very supportive of the design approach that has been adopted.

The panel felt that the siting and orientation of the building was appropriate and had increased the quality of the scheme. The DRP was of the opinion that the height of the building "was not inconsistent with the approach of many of the existing villas typical in the area and seemed to provide a building that sat well

within the wider environment and the landscaped surroundings”.

The proposed building will be sited in a similar position on the site ie set back from the boundary with Old Torwood Road and would have a smaller footprint than the existing building. The orientation reflects that of the existing building, facing south west down the valley towards the harbour. Locating the building at the rear of the site respects the character of Victorian development in the area through providing space around a large building, which makes an important contribution to its setting.

The reduction in the footprint of building on the site is welcomed as this would enable more landscaping and amenity space to be provided around the building. The use of underground parking avoids the need for surface parking and enables an enhanced appearance to the ground around the building. It is less common in Torbay to see underground parking provision incorporated into a proposal. It provides an important advantage to the appearance of the development as it removes the visual intrusion of cars within the curtilage and provides additional space for landscaping. This approach is seen as a positive attribute of the proposed development.

The design of the proposed building would echo design principles of Victorian architecture, with a modern contemporary appearance. Paragraph 59 in the NPPF states “design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail”. Paragraph 60 continues that planning “decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles”.

The design of the proposed building would provide a high quality form of development on the site. The design would provide articulation to the building through the variation of building lines and heights. The external appearance would comprise varied heights and forms that would break up the mass of the building and add significant interest to its appearance. It would also make the scale of the building easier to read and visually accessible. The use of symmetry would contribute to a balanced and pleasing appearance. The recessive appearance of the third floor would be reinforced by it being set back from the building line and also through the use of dark grey panels. This would draw the eye away from the top storey of the building towards the lower parts of the building.

In the materials palette render would be predominant to reflect the appearance of the majority of buildings in the immediate area. More contemporary materials such as frosted glass panels and dark grey cladding panels will contribute to the contemporary form of the building.

In comparison with the existing building on the site the proposed development

will be higher by approximately 3 metres. However, it is considered that the site is capable of accommodating the proposed building without resulting in harm to the appearance and character of the Warberries Conservation area. This is due to the siting of the proposed building which would be set back on the site and also due to the amount of space around the building. This would reduce the visual impact and assist in assimilating the building into the street scene.

As the site is located on the corner of Babbacombe Road and Old Torwood Road there is an opportunity for it to accommodate a taller building, as it would not need to conform to the height of other buildings in the locality which are predominantly two storeys. The scale and proportion of the building works well at the proposed height, a lower building would have less presence and would lack the proportion of the design objective to echo the appearance of a villa. The proposed height of the building has significantly reduced the site coverage in comparison with previous submissions which makes an important contribution to the overall appearance of the proposed development. It should be noted that the DRP commented that they considered the proposed height of the building would be acceptable on this site.

Highways -

The Senior Transport Officer has not raised an objection to the application. The proposal to move the access to the site to the north further from the junction with Babbacombe Road would reduce the proximity of vehicles entering and leaving the site with vehicles using the junction with Babbacombe Road. Twenty one parking spaces would be provided on the site which would be 1.5 spaces per apartment. This ratio of parking would be acceptable in this location which is within walking distance to the town centre and adjacent to a bus route on Babbacombe Road. It is noted that local residents have raised concern about additional demand for parking in the area, however there would be insufficient grounds to require the provision of any greater level of off site parking to serve the development.

The Senior Transport Officer has requested a S106 contribution towards the provision of sustainable transport. Considering the previous use of the site as a hotel the level of traffic generated from the proposed development would be lower than the hotel use and therefore a sustainable transport contribution could not be justified in this case.

Environmental Enhancement -

The DRP noted that the setting of the building would be important to its overall success and made a number of suggestions about how the space around the building could be utilised to contribute a strong landscape setting and also to provide usable and attractive amenity space for residents. These suggestions have been incorporated into the landscape concept plan. A landscape condition

will need to be imposed to ensure detailed planting details are submitted. The Arboricultural officer has requested a tree report and the applicant has been asked to provide this.

A protected species assessment has been submitted in support of the application. This concludes that no evidence of bats, barn owls or other bird species was recorded during a site survey by an ecologist.

Impact on the amenity of adjoining occupiers -

Local residents have raised concerns about the loss of privacy as a result of the development. The proposal will be sited further away from the closest property in Glenthorne Close than the existing hotel. It is noted that there are currently a number of first floor windows in the hotel that directly overlook the side boundary of this property. Due to the orientation of the proposed building the windows and balconies on the north elevation will face the front curtilage of this property rather than the private rear garden area. For these reasons it is considered that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy to the adjoining occupier.

There is a further dwelling situated on the south side of the site on Babbacombe Road that is adjacent to the application site. This property has a floor level significantly lower than the application site. It is well screened from the application site by existing boundary planting. The proposed building would be sited approximately 4 metres further away from the boundary than the current building. The balconies on the elevation facing this property have been designed to be at an angle in order to direct views to the south away from this property. It is considered that the proposal would not have a detrimental effect on the amenity of the occupants.

S106/CIL -

The following S106 contributions would be required to offset the impact of the proposed development on local infrastructure;

Waste Management	£ 700.00
Sustainable Transport	£ 1,121.00
Lifelong Learning	£ 390.00
Greenspace and Recreation	£10,640.00
South Devon Link Road	£12,090.00
Loss of employment	£28,860.00
Total	<u>£53,801.00</u>

Administration charge	£ 2690.05
Total with Administration charge	<u>£56,491.05</u>

Conclusions

In conclusion, the proposal would constitute the demolition of a building within the Warberries conservation area that makes little contribution to the overall character of the area. The proposed redevelopment would provide a good quality building of modern distinctive character that would enhance the appearance and character of the area. The proposed use as 14 apartments would be consistent with the predominant use of buildings in the area. The application includes the provision of underground parking which would enable delivery of a good quality landscaping scheme on the site that would make a positive contribution to visual amenity. For these reasons the proposed development would be acceptable in this location.

Condition(s)/Reason(s)

01. No demolition without a contract for redevelopment
02. materials to accord with submitted samples
03. submit details of finished floor level
04. parking and cycle parking provided
05. bin store provided
06. landscaping scheme submitted
07. landscape scheme implementation
08. boundary treatment
09. provision of bat tubes and swift boxes

Relevant Policies

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