

Application Number

P/2012/0767

Site Address47 Parkhill Road
Torquay
Devon
TQ1 2AR**Case Officer**

Mrs Ruth Robinson

Ward

Wellswood

Description

Proposed demolition of existing dwelling and construction of 5 new terrace houses with parking.

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

This application involves the provision of a terrace of 5 dwelling houses with a basement car park for 10 cars on the site of an existing single family dwelling and garden. It occupies a prominent location overlooking Torquay Harbour and is a key site in terms of the character and appearance of the Torquay Harbour Conservation Area.

A scheme for 6 terrace units of a different design on the site was recently withdrawn as it was considered to be overbearing and lacking in contextual sensitivity. The withdrawn scheme, whilst considered to be acceptable in principle by the DRP raised an objection from English Heritage.

The reduction in the numbers of units coupled with a revised design to the scheme has secured a better relationship with adjacent buildings and results in a scheme that is considered to be visually acceptable and less dominating on the character of the harbourside. The roofscape of the terrace takes a mono-pitch form as opposed to a flat roofed approach and Members' views on this detailed element of the scheme in particular would be welcomed.

There are amenity concerns which, whilst reduced from that in the withdrawn scheme still require clarification. This is to be updated at the meeting as more detailed cross sections are needed of the access to the basement car park and the plinth to the building.

Recommendation

Site Visit, Conditional Approval; Subject to: 1) confirmation in relation to geological stability; 2) the concerns in relation to the basement car park and plinth being resolved; 3) more detailed information in relation to key features and agreement over the approach to the roofscape (mono-pitch or flat roof with overhang); 4) a SUDS scheme being agreed; 5) suitable conditions to be

delegated to the Executive Head of Spatial Planning, and 6) the conclusion of a S106 agreement to secure community infrastructure contributions as detailed in the body of the report to be delegated to the Executive Head of Spatial Planning subject to the agreement being signed within 3 months of the date of the committee meeting.

Site Details

The site comprises an existing 2 storey domestic property set in a spacious garden overlooking Torquay Harbour. The extent of the garden space comprises an important feature in the overall character and appearance of the Torquay Harbour Conservation Area. The garden is bounded to the rear on Parkhill Road by a typical limestone retaining wall.

Parking is provided in a double garage accessed from Parkhill Road. The existing building on the site is in a dilapidated condition, of a post war suburban appearance and was built following bomb damage in the Second World War.

In terms of context, the site sits above the buildings that front the Harbour side and alongside what was, prior to bomb damage, an impressive Regency terrace. In its original form this comprised a 'bookend' terrace. The quality of this has been somewhat compromised by more recent redevelopment comprising a three storey end of terrace unit which does not relate well to the parent terrace in terms of scale or appearance and by the post war redevelopment of the application site.

Detailed Proposals

The application is a detailed submission for the demolition of the existing property and its replacement with a terrace of 5 3-bed dwellings with basement car parking for 10 cars accessed by a ramp from Parkhill Road.

Summary Of Consultation Responses

English Heritage: Objected to the previous withdrawn scheme on the site considering it to be out of character and overbearing. They have been involved in discussions to try and find a more suitable solution. Their detailed comments are awaited.

Drainage: Requires sustainable drainage details before consent is granted.

Highways: Consider that given its location close to the Town centre 5 car parking spaces would be adequate particularly as it is not demonstrated that the basement car park layout is practical for this number of vehicles proposed.

Conservation Officer: Requires large scale details of key features of the buildings before consent is issued.

Design Review Panel: Considered the original withdrawn submission on the site at their meeting of the 4th November 2011. Their comments in summary were that the scale of development was likely to prove acceptable subject to further refinement of the elevations, an alternative more 'celebratory' approach to the southern elevation, provision of a communal managed garden, reconsideration of the roof terraces and further thought about handling waste vehicular and pedestrian movements on a steeply sloping site. They have not considered this revised scheme.

Summary Of Representations

The following objections and observations have been received in respect of this latest scheme (4 letters received in objection, 1 in support).

- Adverse impact on amenity from overlooking/ overbearing impact.
- Adverse impact on amenity arising from ramped access to car park- its height and location adjacent to the flank wall of No 45 Parkhill Road and from height and location of plinth.
- The accuracy of the plans relating to the ramp and plinth questioned and cross sections through it requested.
- Too many units leading to traffic problems and an unsympathetic form of development.
- Question the sites capacity to accommodate the extent of rebuilding considering the history of instability and presence of rock anchors.

Relevant Planning History

P/2011/1385 Construction of 6 dwellings: W/drawn 1.08.12

Key Issues/Material Considerations

The key issues in respect of this application are

1. Design
2. Scale of development.
3. Amenity
4. Highways
5. Structural Integrity of the site

Each of these matters will be addressed in turn.

1. Design/ Scale of Development

The site is very prominent both in short views across the harbour and in longer views from the approach to the town. The site is perceived mainly as a landscape

element in terms of the harbour townscape as the existing building occupies only a small part of the site and is only 2 stories in height. The redevelopment of this site has the potential to have a profound impact on the character of the harbour and for this reason it is important that the replacement scheme is appropriate in terms of size and design and sits comfortably within its context.

The original submission on the site comprised 6 terrace dwellings in a heavily glazed rather monolithic design that extended across the whole garden area. This failed to relate to the character of surrounding buildings, particularly the character of the adjacent terrace, it dominated the plot and also generated concern from neighbours to the site in terms of the extent of overlooking and loss of privacy.

Discussions have since taken place with the applicant in an attempt to identify a reduced scale of development on the site and a more appropriate design response that relates more sympathetically to local context.

A detailed appraisal of the local urban form and character was carried out and this informed a design approach that moved away from a solid block of building to one that has sought to pick up the rhythm of the adjacent terrace and through design devices to reduce its perceived mass.

The number of units has reduced to 5 and whilst this does not represent a significant reduction in terms of the mass of building, the slight reduction in height and breadth and the revised design, which breaks down the mass of the terrace, does achieve a less overbearing form of building. Furthermore, additional space is retained around the building which reduces the overall dominance of the replacement scheme in terms of important public views of the harbourside.

The previous use of extensive glazing has been superseded by a better solid to void relationship that sits more comfortably with the adjacent terrace. This involves the use of rendered elevations with recessed glazed elements that create a clear break between the individual plots. A more defined 'plinth' has been created. This is to be constructed in natural limestone and will appear as a garden rather than a building element, which again reduces the apparent mass of the building.

A set back series of mono pitched roofs results in a rhythmic roof form that will further increase the terrace rhythm. However, there continues to be discussion as to whether the new roof form is preferable to an overhung flat roofed approach.

The end elevation of the terrace will be very prominent. The DRP recommended that this should be more 'celebrated' and opened up to achieve views. This has presented design difficulties as it needs to have a consistent relationship with the main elevation. It is thought that the current submission successfully addresses

the DRP requirement yet achieves an acceptable follow through from the design of the main terrace elevation.

It is thought that the reduction in size of the replacement building coupled with the less monolithic design approach overcomes concerns about the dominance of the scheme on the site and thus on the character of the harbourside.

There is however, a vital need for the detail of the scheme to be fully realised and it needs to be secured before planning permission is issued and not left to be resolved via condition.

Amenity

In terms of amenity, there are concerns arising from overlooking/loss of privacy, from the impact of the plinth and from access to the basement car park.

The reduction in the level of glazing has reduced the impact on amenity. The previous scheme also contained balconies and a flat roof area that was shown to be accessible for sitting out purposes. Whilst this scheme includes balconies and sitting out areas, they are reduced and not considered to be over intrusive.

The arrangement for basement car parking does require a ramp to be constructed from Parkhill Road to a point adjacent to and abutting the flank wall of No. 45 Parkhill Road. Its use; if by up to 10 cars, could have an impact on the amenity of this dwelling. The gradient of the access to the basement car park and its impact requires clarification through detailed cross sections laterally and horizontally through the structure. There is some concern that the gradient will be too severe to be workable or will require more intrusive earthworks than apparent from the plans thus far submitted.

In terms of the plinth, which structurally forms part of the basement car park, there is some dispute over the height and level that it achieves in relation to adjacent properties. The applicant has been asked to clarify this and the matter will be updated at the Meeting.

Highways

Highways have commented that the site is overprovided for in terms of car parking, given its proximity to the town centre. There are unresolved matters in relation to the access to the car park, as explained above. It is anticipated that this matter will have to be updated at the meeting once further information has been submitted about the exact size, position and gradient of the ramped access. Highways recommend that the sustainable transport contribution is allocated towards bus provision.

Structural integrity of the site

Concerns have been raised by neighbours about the geological stability of the site as there has been instability in the past and rock anchors have been used to

prevent further rock falls. There have also been comments made about the stability of the limestone retaining wall as there is much excavation proposed to create a base for the building. The Councils Structures section have checked this aspect of the scheme and consider that geological studies should be commissioned to ensure that the development can be carried out without harm arising. This matter can be dealt with by way of condition.

Drainage

Due to concerns about exacerbating local flooding problems, any additional surface water discharge needs to be mitigated on site through SUDS. Due to the restricted space available for such measures and the potentially impermeable nature of the site, details of this have been requested prior to consent being granted.

S106/CIL -

Community Infrastructure Contributions in line with the approved SPD are required. These amount to:

Waste	£ 250
Sustainable Transport	£13,550
Education	£ 6200
Lifelong learning	£ 2050
Greenspace	£11,850

Conclusions

This is a prominent and sensitive site with the potential to have a profound impact on the character and appearance of the Torquay Harbour Conservation Area.

The DRP considered the 'withdrawn' scheme and did not raise any fundamental concerns in relation to size or extent of plot coverage. English Heritage, who is a statutory consultee did however object to that scheme on the basis of its size, its undue dominance and its lack of contextual cohesion.

This revised scheme for 5 units has sought to overcome the concerns about overbearing impact and design. It is considered that the reduction in the extent of the proposed building envelope and the design devices to reduce the perceived mass have resulted in a form and appearance of building that fits more comfortably in its surroundings and can be accommodated without dominating the site.

There is a need for more detailed information in relation to the ramped access and plinth which it is hoped can be supplied in time to allow Members to be updated at the meeting.

Relevant Policies

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