

Application Number

P/2015/0067

Site AddressMaycliffe Hotel
St Lukes Road North
Torquay
Devon
TQ2 5PD**Case Officer**

Mrs Ruth Robinson

Ward

Tormohun

Description

Change of use from former hotel to 11 flats with some remodelling of roofs and installation of terraced amenity space

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

This application is for a change of use of a much altered and extended Villa, which has been in use for many years as a hotel, to provide 11 flats along with 11 car parking spaces. It also includes alterations in the form of new cladding, remodelled roof and new windows.

It is located in a prominent corner position in the Belgravia Conservation Area. This is characterised by stucco Italianate Villas set in spacious garden plots bounded by stone boundary walls.

To meet Local Plan policy requirements, the proposal must prove itself to sit comfortably in relation to the character of buildings and spaces around it, should achieve the removal or mitigation of unsightly changes and alterations carried out to the building whilst in tourism use, should deliver demonstrably well designed homes with access to amenity space and it should relate well to neighbours in terms of layout and amenity.

However, the scheme involves retention of the entire building and its re-cladding with timber and render panels, remodelling of the roof to create a series of flat roofs with terraces and re-fenestration with aluminium windows.

This produces a building that is wholly out of character with its context in terms of form, appearance, design and setting and as such is harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is also contrary to policies designed to 'rescue' these traditional buildings when uplift in value provides an opportunity to do so.

Further, it relies wholly on the provision of elevated terraces to achieve amenity space which are unacceptable from a design perspective and have attracted objection from neighbours concerned about loss of privacy and disturbance.

Neighbour concerns, in addition to design and amenity, relate to the impact on car parking as the scheme does not include provision of visitor spaces. It is not considered that this is a sustainable reason to resist the development based on current policies, the existing use as a hotel and its central location.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the application be refused for the harm it causes to the character of the Conservation Area, its failure to reverse any of the damage done to the building during its time in tourism use, its failure to deliver well designed homes in terms of the provision of amenity space and a lack of agreement in relation to meeting the impact of the scheme on the local infrastructure.

Statutory Determination Period

As a major application this has a 13 week determination period expiring on the 6th June.

Site Details

The Maycliffe Hotel, formerly a 28 bedroom hotel occupies a relatively prominent corner location to the north of the Belgravia Conservation Area. It has frontages to St Lukes Road North and Cary Road with lesser elevations to St Lukes Park and to the rear of the adjacent Brampton Court Hotel.

The Conservation Area generally is characterised by quintessentially Italianate Villas in generous plots laid out along the contours of Waldon Hill. Plots are bounded by rubble stone walls.

The larger, grander villas generally occupied plots with sea views to the south of Waldon Hill; the application site is situated to the north of Waldon Hill where the typical Italianate Villas are more domestic in character.

The area is mixed, including some holiday related uses but is predominantly residential in character.

This building was one of the earliest villas laid out on St Lukes Road North and probably dates from around the 1860's. Originally set in a spacious plot, it has been much altered over its years in holiday use through unsympathetic alteration and extension, to the extent that the whole plot has been subsumed by building and car parking.

The roof has been extended upwards to create a predominantly flat roofed structure.

There is currently a tarmac car park which occupies the whole of the Cary Road frontage and provides spaces for up to 10 vehicles.

It is not located within a defined PHAA.

Detailed Proposals

This application is for the conversion of the hotel to provide 11 1 and 2 bed apartments with re fenestration and re-cladding of all elevations with a mix of timber and render panels. The scheme also includes re-modelling of the roof to create a more consistent roof form and use of flat roofed areas created to provide terraced amenity space.

Summary Of Consultation Responses

The Conservation Officer considers that the resulting building has little relationship to the character of the Belgravia Conservation Area.

Summary Of Representations

Two letters of objection have been received which raise concerns about the lack of architectural consistency, impact on privacy from use of the elevated terraces and the impact on availability of car parking

Relevant Planning History

P/1989/1287: Extensions and Alterations to provide additional bedroom accommodation: 4.10.89.

Key Issues/Material Considerations

The key issues are the impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the quality of the residential accommodation to be provided, the impact on amenity and the impact on parking. Each will be addressed in turn.

Principle and Planning Policy -

In terms of the relevant policies, the Adopted Local Plan (policy TU7) and the SPD 'Revised Guidance on PHAA's' 2004 indicates that a change of use to residential accommodation is acceptable in principle subject to the development providing an acceptable standard of accommodation (Policies H4, H9 and H10) and delivering development that preserves or enhances the character of the Conservation Area (BES, BE1 and BE5).

Paragraph 4.10 of the Adopted SPD 'Revised Guidance on PHAA's' requires that in approving a change of use, improvements to buildings have been compromised by past extensions and alterations during their time as holiday accommodation.

This requirement is now included in a more robust form in the emerging Local Plan, Policy TO2 confirms that where a change of use away from tourism is permitted, there will be a requirement to restore land or buildings to their original historic form by the removal of unsightly features, signage clutter and extensions. It also states that amenity space lost through overdevelopment as holiday use should be reinstated and that a high priority will be given to restoring the character and appearance of buildings within conservation areas. Weight can be attached to this policy, as it has not attracted objections during formal

consultation on the new Local Plan.

In functional terms, the rationalisation of sites by the removal of later poor quality extensions also leads to the delivery of better laid out homes with amenity space, adequate onsite parking and buildings with proper settings.

Detailed policies in the emerging Local Plan, DE1 DE2 and DE3, build on the more generalised policies in the Adopted Local Plan and provide detailed guidance on the quality of residential environments including space standards for dwellings along with minimum garden sizes.

In terms of parking standards, the Adopted Local Plan defines a maximum number of 1.5 spaces per unit. The emerging Local Plan defines a minimum of 1 space per unit with visitor parking.

Impact on the Character of the Belgravia Conservation Area

As has been established, there is a need for development in Conservation Areas to preserve and enhance their character. In addition, the Adopted SPD and the emerging Local Plan require improvements to be secured to buildings previously used for holiday accommodation which have been compromised by past extensions and alterations.

The increase in land value arising from the change of use provides a funding opportunity to secure these improvements. Failure to achieve improvements now will mean the town is left with a degraded townscape in perpetuity. In Conservation Areas and where buildings have a discernible pedigree this requirement is particularly important.

The Maycliffe Hotel extends virtually across the whole plot and has been significantly and unsympathetically extended in recent years. The roof has been massively remodelled to provide a large series of flat roofed elements with a single retained pitched gabled roof. More traditional pitched roofs survive at ground and first floor level.

Whilst the alterations to the building were considered at the time to be acceptable due to the contribution to the local economy and the promotion of tourism, as these buildings revert back to residential use it is considered vital to achieve improvements to the buildings both in terms of their visual appeal and the creation of more space and setting to meet the needs of future occupiers.

The applicant's response to the need to secure improvements has been to retain the building in its entirety, to remodel the existing range of gable roofs and box dormers to create a more regular shaped roof and to re-clad the wings with contrasting coloured render panels and the central core with timber cladding. Existing pitched roofs are largely remodelled to provide flat roofed terraces. They have also included new consistently styled aluminium windows to replace the

current mix of sash and casement windows. Pitched roofs have been remodelled to provide terrace areas.

Existing incidental areas of landscaping have been upgraded to provide a more attractive external area. In another location, this design response may have been welcomed however; the problem is that it bears no relationship to the original character of the building nor to the clearly discernible character of the Belgravia Conservation Area which is primarily defined by stucco Italianate Villas with generous garden plots defined by stone boundary walls.

The Heritage Appraisal, submitted to justify the proposal, does not attempt to document the historical evolution of this building and whilst it is accepted that little of the original form is discernible today, there is sufficient evidence to broadly understand what the original building would have looked like and what its distinctive characteristics would have been. Whilst it may be unfeasible to return entirely to the footprint and form of the original villa, a more robust analysis of buildings evolution would provide a better understanding of its intrinsic character and therefore a clearer idea about how a more sympathetic and considered design solution might be achieved.

The Heritage Appraisal identifies the whole plot coverage and increased massing as harmful describing the building as a 'mass of blocks that appear to have been literally piled together over time with no sense of architectural composition'. It explains that the current form of the building is retained and 'added to in places' in order to make the conversion viable and to 'tidy it up'. The appraisal argues that this does introduce a greater architectural integrity, although it goes on to criticise the design solution for being out of character with the Conservation Area in terms of the use of materials, (alien timber cladding and dark aluminium windows) and the inclusion of alien features (balconies with glazed screens).

It is not considered that the approach taken, of retaining the extended building in its entirety, provides an acceptable solution in terms of the form and setting of the building. The remodelling of the roof, whilst producing a more consistent overall form nonetheless creates an alien feature within the more traditional pitched and gabled roofscape of the conservation area. The recladding, particularly the use of timber is similarly out of character as is the refenestration with aluminium casement windows. A more contemporary design response is not in itself a problem but it needs to have some reference to its context.

To summarise, the use is acceptable in principle and in accordance with policy TU7. However, it does not acceptably remedy or mitigate the harm to the character of the building accrued through its use for tourism purposes, the design approach taken is at odds with the character of buildings around it in terms of the resultant form, mass and design and as such is harmful to the character of the Belgravia Conservation Area contrary to policies BES, BE1 BE5 in the Adopted Local Plan, paragraph 4.10 of the adopted SPD 'Revised Guidance in the

PHAAs' and DE3 and TO2 in the Emerging Local Plan.

Quality Of Residential Accommodation to be Provided

The emerging Local Plan includes detailed requirements in relation to the quality of residential schemes in terms of amenity, layout and space standards. This scheme provides for 11 new 2 bed dwellings on the site. Of these 4 are below the minimum size for 2 bed flats (66m²) and three do not have access to the minimum of 10m² of amenity space per unit.

Due to the lack of space around the building, the amenity space that is provided is almost exclusively in the form of balconies and terraces. More space around the building would be available if Policy TO2 had been complied with.

It is accepted that minor discrepancies between proposed schemes and policy standards should not necessarily be fatal to a scheme and that a balanced assessment should be made of the scheme in the round. The applicants did respond to pre app advice regarding the numbers and sizes of units and the lack of amenity space by reducing the numbers of flats from 13 to 11 and remodelling roofs to provide terraces.

However, the only amenity space provided is in the form of elevated flat roofed terraces which are an alien feature in the Conservation Area. The inclusion of a more traditional roofscape would render the scheme severely substandard in terms of amenity space.

Impact on Amenity

There have been objections to the inclusion of elevated terraces on the grounds of amenity. This has the potential to cause nuisance through loss of privacy and noise disturbance which is exacerbated by its elevated position looking down on neighbouring properties. The terraces themselves are poorly related to each other and open to views from the street which will encourage the use of random screening to the detriment of the townscape. As such, the inclusion of these features would be contrary to policies H9 in the adopted Local Plan and DE3 in the Emerging Local Plan.

Impact on Car Parking

Objections have been raised about the impact on the availability of street car parking. The scheme delivers a ratio of 1:1 in terms of car parking with no provision for visitor parking. However, given the levels of car parking that could be generated by an operation of the existing use and the Adopted Local Plan standards which define a maximum number of spaces in a central location such as this then it is not considered that this could be sustained as a reason for refusal.

The existing tarmac car park is completely open to the street with all the original stone boundary walls having been demolished. Whilst the proposed scheme

sees the incidental planting beds upgraded, there are no other improvements in terms of reinstatement of the traditional means of enclosure to the site. In design terms this further counts against the scheme.

S106/CIL -

The Adopted SPD 'Planning Contributions and Affordable Housing' would have required a contribution of £ 42,430 to meet the impact of the development on local infrastructure.

From April 6th 2015, revised government policy limits the pooling of contributions and as a consequence, contributions can only be requested when there are specific schemes in close proximity to the site and which would be directly affected by the scheme in question. In the absence of any relevant schemes, only the waste management contribution (£550) could be collected.

However, in this case, as the scheme is not acceptable on planning merit, there is no agreement in relation to the scale of contribution that should be delivered.

Conclusions

It is recommended that the application be refused for the harm it causes to the character of the Conservation Area, its failure to reverse any of the damage done to the building during its time in tourism use, its failure to deliver well designed homes in terms of the provision of amenity space and a lack of agreement in relation to meeting the impact of the scheme on the local infrastructure.

Recommendation

Refuse.

Condition(s)/Reason(s)

1. The Belgravia Conservation Area is largely defined by stucco Italianate Villas set in garden plots with stone boundary walls.

The proposed treatment of this over extended villa is harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and fails to deliver the enhancements to the building and its setting required by paragraph 4.10 of the Adopted SPD 'Revised Guidance on PHAAs' and Policy TO2 of the Emerging Local Plan. This requires that unsympathetic accretions and alterations to buildings previously in tourism use are mitigated as a consequence of the change of use.

The retention of the entire building and its re-cladding with a mix of render and timber panels, along with re-modelling of the roof to produce a series of flat roofs and elevated terraces and re-fenestration with aluminium casement windows produces a building that is at odds with the prevailing character of the Belgravia Conservation Area in terms of form, design,

appearance and setting.

As such, the scheme is contrary to policies H9, H10, BES, BE1 BE5 of the Adopted Local Plan, to the Adopted SPD 'Revised Guidance on PHAA's', to policy TO2 of the Emerging Local Plan and to the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

2. The scheme relies wholly on elevated terraces for the provision of amenity space to serve the proposed dwellings. Policies H9 and 10 in the Adopted Local Plan require new dwellings (inter alia) to demonstrate a high standard of design, to have access to amenity space and to relate well to neighbours. Policy DE3 in the Emerging Local Plan includes minimum standards in terms of amenity space. These requirements are not met as the elevated terraces are not considered acceptable from a design or amenity perspective and as such the scheme fails when considered against policies H9, H10 and DE3 in the Adopted and Emerging Local Plan.
3. The scheme should deliver community infrastructure contributions in line with the adopted SPD 'Planning Contributions and Affordable Housing' in order to mitigate the impact of the development on the local area. The scheme does not secure this and as such it is contrary to the provisions of the SPD and to policy CFS and CF6 of the saved adopted Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011.

Relevant Policies

-