

DECISION DATE 29 June 2005	APPLICATION NO. 05/00604/FUL A 7	PLANNING COMMITTEE: 27 June 2005
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF PREMISES AT 196, CHANGE OF USE OF DENTAL SURGERY TO 3 FLATS AT 194 AND ERECTION OF 7 NEW FLATS WITH RETAIL UNIT TO THE GROUND FLOOR OF 196		SITE ADDRESS 194 - 196 EUSTON ROAD, MORECAMBE, LA4 5LE.
APPLICANT: Mr S Wojciechowicz, Hillside House, Ghyll Bank, Aughton, Lancaster, LA2 8LU.		AGENT: JMP Architects Ltd

REASON FOR DELAY

Not applicable.

PARISH NOTIFICATION

Morecambe Neighbourhood Council - No observations received at the time this report was drafted.

LAND USE ALLOCATION/DEPARTURE

Within the urban area defined in the Lancaster District Local Plan. The site is also within the Poulton renewal area.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

County Council Highways - Observations awaited.

Engineering Services - No highway objections, in view of the location, but notes the lack of off street parking. The site is within an area currently being considered for a residents' parking scheme. Should this be adopted, people living in the flats would be eligible for a Residents Parking Permit.

Strategic Housing - The proposal is within the Poulton Renewal Area. The proposal to create ten flats is considered over intensive and contrary to the aim of converting houses in multiple occupation into single family homes. In addition the outlook from the living rooms of the new units is poor, and the external amenity space is considered to be insufficient for the number of units proposed. They ask that permission should be refused.

United Utilities - No objections. There is a public sewer running to the north of the site and no building will be permitted within 3 metres of it. A separate metered supply will be required for each dwelling.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED

A letter has been received from the occupier of the adjoining property, who objects to the proposal on the following grounds:-

- Lack of off street parking.
- Additional traffic would be generated.
- The area needs family dwellings, not more flats.
- Awkward access for emergency vehicles.
- Façade proposed is out of keeping with the area.
- Problems with refuse collection.

She is also concerned that the flats would be likely to let to tenants rather than owner occupied.

Any other representations received will be reported orally at Committee.

REPORT

This site is on the north side of Euston Road, immediately to the west of the former cinema now occupied by the First Stop D-I-Y store. No. 194 is a three storey terraced property typical of the area, which is now vacant but was until recently occupied by a dental surgery with a dental laboratory above. Immediately adjoining it is no. 196 which is quite different in character. It consists of a two storey building with its roof ridge at right angles to the road. It is used by a hairdressing salon on the ground floor but there is a one bedroom flat, accessed by an external stair, at first floor level. There is a yard at the side. There is also an open area at the rear which is overgrown and derelict; it adjoins the car park and service yard behind First Stop D-I-Y.

Both properties are in need of renovation. The applicant's proposal involves retaining no. 194 and replacing no. 196 and the yard behind with a four storey extension to it, designed to reflect the character and materials of the former cinema. The building would then accommodate a retail unit to replace the hairdressing salon and a total of ten flats. Of these four would have two bedrooms, and the remaining six would be one bedroom units. While space standards within them would be acceptable, all would depend on combined kitchen and living room areas.

The proposal is accompanied by a statement prepared by the applicant's architect which argues that the redevelopment of the site, including the derelict land at the rear, will offer regeneration benefits. It points out that the site is a central one, well served by public transport. The design submitted is intended to be contemporary in style, providing a link between the former cinema and the Victorian terrace to the west of it.

The proposal has to be considered in relation to policy H19 of the Lancaster District Local Plan. This requires that new development within the existing built up area of Lancaster, Morecambe, Heysham and Carnforth should:-

- Not result in the loss of green space or other locally important open space.
- Not have an adverse effect on the amenities of nearby residents.
- Provide a high standard of amenity.
- Make adequate provision for the disposal of sewage and waste water, and
- Make satisfactory provision for access, servicing and cycle and car parking.

It also has to be assessed against the criteria set out in SPG16 on the release of land for residential development. To qualify as a category A proposal, the development needs to:-

- Assist in the City Council's Renewal objectives.

- Secure the future of a historic building, or
- Meet a specific local housing need.

So far as policy H19 is concerned, the scheme is open to criticism on several counts. The outlook from the flats at the rear is poor, and depends for light and aspect on the back yards behind houses in Lancaster Road and Westover Street. On the ground floor the living room windows of one of the flats would look directly into the bedrooms of another, only 4.5 metres away; the rest of its outlook would consist largely of the bin storage area. The amount of open space available for communal use would be minimal and it is difficult to see how cycle storage could be accommodated satisfactorily anywhere on the site.

Turning to SPG16, the accommodation proposed is intended for general occupation, not for a specific client group so justification for the scheme depends upon it assisting in the regeneration of the area. As the comments by Strategic Housing make clear, the emphasis in the Poulton area is on providing more accommodation suitable for single family occupation. The flats proposed here would run counter to this objective.

Although it is a Building Regulations rather than a planning matter, it should also be noted that the layouts of some of the upper flats are open to serious criticism. No provision has been made for a means of escape from their bathrooms in the event of a fire in the combined kitchen/living room areas, which is where one is most likely to occur.

Central government advice, as set out in PPG3 (Planning Policy Guidance: Housing) stresses the benefits of high density development in locations served by public transport. It also promotes the use of mixed use development. However it also stresses the need to make efficient use of land "without compromising the quality of the environment" (paragraph 54). On these criteria, the present scheme is an over intensive one which does not meet the Local Plan objectives.

Members are recommended to refuse consent.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT IMPLICATIONS

This application has to be considered in relation to two sections of the Human Rights Act: Article 8 (privacy/family life), and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). There are no issues arising from the proposal which appear to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT PERMISSION BE REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. Approving additional residential development would add to the supply of housing land available for development in the Lancaster District at a time when its strategic housing targets are already more than adequately catered for by existing planning permissions. This would add to the over supply of housing in the District which would prejudice the need to regenerate declining urban areas of the region and conflict with policies 12 and 13 of the deposited Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016 and the urban renaissance policies of Regional Planning Guidance.
2. The proposal would be contrary to policy H19 of the Lancaster District Local Plan - overdevelopment of a restricted site, insufficient open space, lack of cycle parking, would not provide an appropriate standard of amenity.