

DECISION DATE 24 June 2005	APPLICATION NO. 05/00560/FUL A20	PLANNING COMMITTEE: 27 June 2005
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF SINGLE STOREY AND TWO STOREY GARAGES AND ERECTION OF A THREE STOREY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT COMPRISING TWO HOUSES AND SEVEN FLATS		SITE ADDRESS YMCA FLEET SQUARE, NEW ROAD, LANCASTER.
APPLICANT: YMCA Lancaster and District, Heart Of The City, Fleet Square, Lancaster, LA1 1HA.		AGENT: Harrison Pitt Architects

REASON FOR DELAY

Committee Cycle.

PARISH NOTIFICATION

None.

LAND USE ALLOCATION/DEPARTURE

The site lies partly within the City Conservation Area, and partly within the Castle Conservation Area. The adjacent building is a Grade II listed structure. The properties to the east on New Street are designated as Key Townscape Features.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

English Heritage - Not necessary to provide further comment.

Ancient Monuments Society - No objections in principle. The use of natural stone is welcome but queries whether it is solely an external skin and the method of coursing of the stone.

Engineering Services - No objections in principle to the redevelopment. In highway terms the removal of the substandard vehicle accesses on Bridge Lane is to be welcomed. Clarification regarding the use of the courtyard is required to ensure parking does not continue. Cycle parking at the appropriate level would be appropriate too. A condition requiring the vehicular entrances to be rendered redundant and returned to the original footway specifications is required. Advice regarding naming and numbering of the properties is also provided.

Environmental Health Services - recommends that a land contamination condition be applied. Standard hours of construction condition is required too. There should be no burning of waste during the development.

Strategic Housing - single bedrooms should have a minimum floor area of 6.2 square metres. The kitchen unit needs identifying on Apartment Number 5. The layout appear to conform to all other relevant legislation administered by the Service.

Environment Agency - No objections subject to the provision of a desk top study into land contamination prior to the commencement of development. Advice regarding foul and surface water systems is provided.

United Utilities - No objection to the proposal. Advice regarding water supplies is also provided.

Conservation Officer - Views awaited.

County Highways - Views awaited.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED

None to date.

REPORT

The Site and its Surroundings

The site that is the subject of this application is located within the centre of Lancaster, adjacent to the main arterial route through the city. Fleet Square is situated at the junction of New Road, Bridge Lane and Damside Street.

The buildings in question comprise of a pair of two-storey, gabled stone structures adjoining the former Pye's Building, which is an imposing five-storey listed structure. To the east of the site lies Bridge Lane and the rear garden of 80 Church Street, which is in commercial use. Similarly commercial uses occupy positions to the south, whilst the majority of the smaller properties to the west on New Road are now used for residential purposes. The nearest properties to the site, numbers 9 and 10 New Road, are within the applicant's ownership and are part of the YMCA use.

The Pye's Building is physically connected to the existing structures, and an internal alleyway forms an effective barrier between the buildings.

The Proposal and Site History

The proposal involves the demolition of the two smaller warehouse-garages and the erection of a three-storey residential development comprising of nine units of accommodation. These units will include a two-bedroomed flat, 2 two-bedroomed maisonettes and 6 one-bedroomed flats, all of which are entirely self-contained. A formal courtyard will be provided in the north-eastern corner of the site, and this have a stone façade and iron railings. A less formal courtyard in the north-western corner will provide access to Units 1 and 2.

The replacement building will be T-shaped and as such the principal outlook from all windows will be towards the two newly-created courtyards.

The rear of the site is enclosed by a retaining wall and the bulk of the new building will abut this wall, which will be raised in height. The applicant has confirmed on the submitted site plan that the land immediately to the rear is within their ownership. This land will accommodate a separate maintenance access leading to the first floor of the development and rear windows to units 6 & 9. Two windows to the main habitable rooms of Units 4 and 6 will be inset into the alleyway wall to the east.

Some Members may recall an application in 2002 (Planning Reference 02/01253/CU) for the conversion of the Pye's Building and the adjoining warehouses to a multi-purpose venue for the YMCA. This venue would include child-care facilities, an internet café, offices and training facilities. This permission has not yet been implemented. The use of the warehouses for the proposed housing scheme would remove the proposed function hall, fitness suite and toilet facilities from the original scheme, and it would be likely that a reduced scheme be submitted in the future for the Pye's Building alone.

Design and Amenity

The external elevations and outer courtyard walls will be constructed from stone to match the adjacent building. Render will be used on the inner elevations. A natural slate roof, timber doors and windows and aluminium rainwater goods will also be used.

The applicant had considered converting the existing buildings as part of the scheme. However it was considered that a new building predominantly setback from the Bridge Lane/Fleet Square frontage, would provide a more acceptable form of development, whilst also exposing more of the imposing Pye's Building.

During pre-application discussions the applicant also agreed to the removal of all balcony features from the development, and this has resulted in a more traditional form of fenestration which, when combined with the simple pitched roofs, provides a simple scheme that is enhanced by the courtyard features.

Perhaps the most critical issue is that of residential amenity. Because of the setback nature of the proposal, the amount of light that would be available to habitable room windows has been questioned, in particular to Units 3 and 4 on the ground floor. However your Officers are of the view that the development is akin to other housing schemes where right-angled courtyards are created. The outlook from the main habitable room in unit 3 will be towards the more open courtyards, whilst the windows to the lounge/diner and single bedroom in Unit 4 will be via four openings looking towards the courtyard. Both units are therefore considered acceptable.

At the time of compiling this report a minor alteration to the bedroom layout to Unit 1 was anticipated. Any alterations will be verbally reported to Members.

Vehicular Considerations

The existing buildings have vehicular accesses to Bridge Lane. Additionally, the current yard area to the west is used by upto five vehicles a day for car parking. Clearly this is a potentially dangerous part of the highway network given the blind bend on Bridge Lane and the speeds that vehicles can reach as they come down the hill. The loss of these opportunities for car manoeuvres is to be welcomed.

To prevent unauthorised parking in the future, it is envisaged that bollards will need to be provided to the front of the north-western courtyard.

The dwellings will not be served by car parking. The site has excellent public transport links adjacent to the Primary Bus Corridor and to the Bus Station. It will be necessary to provide an area for cycle parking, and this could be a condition of any approval.

Landscaping

There are several mature trees on the Bridge Lane corner. However none of them are situated within this parcel of land. No tree felling is proposed. Permission would be required for any tree removal in this locality because of the Conservation Area designation.

The new landscaping will comprise of low-level shrub planting to both courtyards, and the provision of a small feature tree in the north-eastern courtyard.

Housing Policy

The proposal has been considered as a suitable exception to Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 16, which relates to the phasing of new residential development. The scheme is one that would enhance the Conservation Areas and the adjoining Listed Building. It would also bring a neglected site back into beneficial use in a prominent, sustainable location.

Conclusion

It is therefore considered that the proposal accords with the District Plan Policies. It will provide much-needed one and two-bedroomed accommodation in the heart of the city, close to public transport nodes. The design will complement the recent developments in this location and provide a sensitive and appropriate form of accommodation on a prominent part of the Conservation Area.

Members are advised that this is a proposal that can be supported.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

This application has to be considered in relation to the provisions of the Human Rights Act, in particular Article 8 (privacy/family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). Having regard to the principles of proportionality, it has been concluded that there are no issues arising from the proposal that 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.

REASONS FOR APPROVAL

The decision to grant planning permission has been taken having regard to policies in the Lancashire Structure Plan and policy Nos.E33, E35 and SPG 16 in the Lancaster District Local Plan together with all other relevant considerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to the following conditions: -

1. Development as per approved plans.
2. Samples of all external materials to be submitted and agreed.
3. Colour of render to be agreed.
4. Precise details of windows, doors and rainwater goods to be submitted and agreed.
5. Standard landscaping condition.
6. Details of all floor surfaces and treatments and courtyard railings to be agreed.
7. Bollards to be provided to the north-western courtyard in a scheme to be agreed.
8. Existing vehicular entrances to garages and yard to be rendered redundant and returned to original footway specification.
9. Cycle parking to be agreed.
10. Standard land contamination condition requiring desk-top study.
11. No burning of wastes on site.
12. Standard hours of use condition.
13. As required by consultees.

