

Agenda Item A12	Committee Date 29 June 2015	Application Number 15/00248/FUL
Application Site Grove Street Depot Grove Street Morecambe Lancashire	Proposal Demolition of existing depot and erection of two three-storey residential buildings comprising a total of 21 self-contained one-bedroom supported living apartments with associated open space and car parking.	
Name of Applicant HB Villages Development Ltd	Name of Agent Mr Michael Gilbert	
Decision Target Date 29 June 2015	Reason For Delay N/A	
Case Officer	Mr Andrew Holden	
Departure	No	
Summary of Recommendation	Approval	

1.0 The Site and its Surroundings

- 1.1 Grove Street Depot is situated to the north of the West End adjacent to the Frontierland site. The site fronts Grove Street, which is accessed off West End Road, and backs onto no.10 Highfield Crescent. It also abuts Back West End Road North, an alley that is utilised to serve the rear of the properties on West End Road and Highfield Crescent. Whilst Frontierland, to the north, has previously been used for leisure facilities and now has consent for a retail scheme, the immediate area to the west, south and east of the site is in residential use.
- 1.2 The application site falls within the Morecambe Area Action Plan and adjacent to West End Conservation Area. There is a group of protected trees immediately to the north of the site.

2.0 The Proposal

- 2.1 The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing depot and erection of two 3 storey buildings comprising 9 and 12 self-contained apartments respectively both with associated office and additional overnight bedroom accommodation for staff. The properties would be constructed with brick and rendered walls under a concrete tiled pitched roof. Externally the apartment buildings would be served by communal garden space, bin and scooter stores. The properties would be accessed from Grove Street with 14 car parking spaces proposed perpendicular to the road.

3.0 Site History

- 3.1 The planning history of this site in recent decades relates to the building's previous use and the principle of redevelopment for residential purposes:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
87/00893/HST	Change of use for storage repair maintenance and refurbishment of amusement devices	Permitted

05/00774/OUT	Outline application for the erection of eight three-storey town houses	Permitted
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4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and non-statutory consultees:

Consultee	Response
County Highways	No objection - the impact of additional vehicular movements and parking pressures due to the influence of the development are unlikely to have a significant effect on the surrounding public highway network. A condition relating to drop kerbs is requested.
Natural England	No objection
Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions relating to dust control, hours of construction and contamination conditions
Conservation Officer	No comments received
Strategic Housing Officer	Concerns relating to lack of available information over demand and therefore the lack of associated strategic support from relevant Commission Managers
Police	No objection. Suggestions that the development should be built to Secured by Design standards and incorporate CCTV, external lighting, secure boundary treatments and other security measures to openings
Fire and Rescue	It should be ensured that the scheme fully meets all the requirements of part B5 of the Building Regulations.

5.0 Neighbour Representations

5.1 No correspondence has been received.

6.0 Principal National and Development Plan Policies

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework indicates that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (**paragraph 14**). The following paragraphs of the NPPF are relevant to the determination of this proposal:

Paragraph **17** – 12 core land-use planning principles
 Paragraphs **56** and **58** – good design
 Paragraphs **129**, **131**, **132** and **134** – conservation

6.2 Core Strategy

SC1 – Sustainable development
SC2 – Urban concentration
SC4 – Meeting housing requirements
SC5 – Achieving quality in design

6.3 Development Management DPD

DM22 – Parking
DM29 – Trees
DM32 – Setting of heritage assets
DM35 – Key design principles
DM41 – New residential development
DM45 – Housing for vulnerable communities

6.4 Morecambe Area Action Plan DPD

AS2 – Improve the condition of buildings and encourage beneficial occupancy

7.0 Comment and Analysis

7.1 The key material considerations arising from this application are:

- Principle of supported living (residential) development in this location;
- Impact on the Conservation Area and other design considerations; and
- Impact on residential amenity.

7.2 Principle of supported living (residential) development in this location

7.2.1 The principle of a residential development of this site has been previously established in 2005. The site is situated in a very sustainable location within the urban area of Morecambe. This particular form of residential accommodation is for supported living, specialised accommodation for vulnerable adults with disabilities, to be managed and operated by Inclusion Housing (who manage the properties) and Lifeways Group (who provide the on-site support for the residents). The latter offers a wide range of services to support disabled people in many different ways; their expertise includes providing support and personalised care in people's own homes to assist residents to live as independently as possible, and to increase their independency over time.

7.2.2 Applications of this type should only normally be considered where there is clear support against evidenced local need from the relevant Commissioning Managers for mental health with the District housing lead's input and the model has been fully agreed in principle in advance of planning applications being made. This is particularly relevant at the present time given that the County Council has not yet finalised its commissioning plans for vulnerable groups or determined the future commissioning model that applies with clear information about the level of local need that needs to be met. As things stand, there is no real evidence to suggest that there is or is not a local need for the development. The Commissioning Managers have not categorically stated the level of need or made it clear to what extent they support this development. Whilst the accommodation intends to provide long term housing for people with learning difficulties, the units for those with enduring mental illness are of a more short-term nature with an expectation that individuals will move on into mainstream accommodation when they are ready to live independently. It has neither been made clear what prioritisation scheme will be applied when filling vacancies, nor what provision would be in place for appropriate move on accommodation. There can be no expectation that the Council will facilitate move-on accommodation and this has been made very clear to the applicant by the Strategic Housing Officer from the outset. It would have been helpful if the applicant could have clarified the process of filling vacancies and whether this is going to be formally agreed through a nomination arrangement with the mental health/learning disability teams.

7.2.3 Policy DM44 outlines the policy in relation to accommodation for vulnerable communities. The information submitted with the application is a bit light on detail, so it is difficult to assess the application against the policy's criteria. The pre-ambule to the policy sets out a requirement that any new accommodation for people with learning difficulties should normally be delivered through a Registered Provider. It is understood that Inclusion Housing are a Community Interest Company with Registered Provider status and therefore satisfy this requirement. However, it should be noted that the rents proposed for this scheme are considerably higher than any of the other schemes locally operated by Registered Providers. The Learning Disabilities Commissioning Team, to the Strategic Housing Officer's knowledge, have not formally commented on the proposals, though the Officer is aware that the former Commissioning Manager for Mental Health is in support of the scheme. That said, the Learning Disabilities Commissioning Manager for Lancaster did express a number of initial concerns about the proposed development both in terms of the suitability of the area (high levels of vulnerable and marginalised people in the West End) and demand for a scheme situated in the West End of Morecambe.

7.2.4 All in all, there is a lack of information regarding the demand for such development, and if it does exist, whether that demand should be met in the West End of Morecambe and if that demand can afford the rents being proposed. Likewise there is a deficiency of detail relating to the occupancy prioritisation process and then provision of move on accommodation at the end of the tenancy. This makes the assessment of this proposal very difficult. However, in conclusion both Housing and Planning Officers consider the proposal to be acceptable in principle but require the imposition of a

condition to ensure that the form of housing being proposed is actually delivered. 1-bed apartments are not encouraged within local policy documents within the West End. Given the housing market that exists in that area and the positive work that has already been undertaken to try and balance the local housing market, 21 one-bed apartments would not normally be supported. An exemption can be made due to the form of care being proposed, but to ensure that the care is included (in other words this is not an open C3 use for any prospective resident) a condition is required.

7.3 Impact on the Conservation Area and other design considerations

7.3.1 The depot does little preserve the setting of the Conservation Area, and could be easily argued to detract from it. The proposal is to demolish the depot building and replace it with 2 new residential buildings, both 3-storey in height. The principle of 3-storey properties on this site has been previously established in 2005, and continues to be acceptable given the scale of most of the residential development in the immediate area. The loss of the depot will remove the bland frontage at the end of Highfield Crescent and the side of Back West End Road North, which will enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area boundary, subject to agreeing suitable site boundary treatments with the applicant. This can be conditioned. Whilst the northern block is proposed to have no openings on its rear elevation, which faces the end of Highfield Crescent, it is set back from the road and has a rear projection that will help to animate this elevation. Likewise the eastern elevation of the southern block lacks openings, but its length is broken up by staggered gable elevations. Overall, it is anticipated that the proposal will enhance the setting and boundary of the Conservation Area.

7.3.2 The existing depot building is constructed of brick and there are a few residential properties in the vicinity of brick construction. Therefore the use of brick and render, whilst not the predominant material in the local area, is acceptable. The use of an interlocking concrete tile is more concerning, with slate dominating the existing environment. However, natural slate could not be justified in this location. A slate grey coloured tile with a thin leading edge would be acceptable and reasonable, and this can be conditioned.

7.3.4 The depot building fills virtually the entire site, which the proposed 2 residential apartment blocks would not. This will improve the local setting, though it is disappointing to note the dominance of car parking to the site frontage along Grove Street. It is fully acknowledged that local streets are lined with parked cars and this scheme seeks to provide off street parking. It would have been preferable to screen the parking but given the constraints of the site such opportunities were very limited, especially given that the applicant has sought to achieve the maximum amount of parking to serve the development to alleviate pressure on the local streets. The only feasible solution is therefore to run a line of 14 spaces perpendicular to the road to the buildings' frontages. Likewise it is disappointing to note that the entrance to the northern apartment block is to the rear. Whilst this could be designed out, it is considered on balance not to be so detrimental to the scheme that a reason for refusal could be sustained. That said, it must be noted that the scheme has been enhanced since pre-application discussions took place to introduce some animation to the facades in the form of bay windows and the roof arrangement has been simplified and reduced in bulk. These are significant improvements to the scheme's design and improve the development's relationship with its neighbours.

7.4 Impact on residential amenity

7.4.1 The proposal has been designed to respect the neighbouring properties on Grove Street, Highfield Crescent and West End Road. Taking these groups of properties in order, the facades of the proposed apartment blocks are set back by at least 21m, with the exception of one staff office and overnight accommodation which is set back 19m. The adopted standard is 21m but given this is a built-up, urban area with existing terraces facing across highways at distances less than 19m, this is deemed to be acceptable. The end terraced property on Highfield Crescent will have an improved outlook from its frontage with the loss of the depot building to its eastern elevation. The side facing windows in its outrigger will also enjoy a clear view across the proposed gardens to the apartment blocks towards the gap between the 2 buildings. Lastly, the outriggers on the West End Road properties (nos. 44, 46 and 48) that face towards the application site have blank end elevations. Nos 42, 50 and 52 do have windows at the end of their outriggers but these will not be facing onto the side elevation on the proposed southern apartment block, but rather than rear garden or the parking to the front. Either way, the proposed development does not adversely impact these properties.

The local residents will also benefit from a non-intrusive end use on the application site as at present the depot building can be utilised for a light industrial use, albeit with some noise restrictions such as acoustic measures and hours of use as set out on the 1987 consent. A residential use is less likely to result in noise impacts.

7.4.2 The proposed apartments have generally been designed to meet or exceed the Council's adopted internal space standards for flats. However, 3 of the apartments in the northern block have bedrooms that fall 1 sq.m below the adopted standard, but due to the fenestration pattern on the front elevation there is no opportunity to extend the bedroom spaces without reconfiguring the internal arrangements in such a way that the flats' layouts would become convoluted. The slight lack of space in these bedrooms though is more than compensated for by the associated living spaces in those apartments exceeding the standards by over 5 sq.m. This is an acceptable compromise.

7.5 Other considerations

7.5.1 Parking

14 car parking space are proposed to serve the 21 apartments and associated staff accommodation. 3 of these 14 spaces are designed as disabled spaces. The Highway Authority has responded to this application concluding that this is sufficient number to serve the development. These spaces adjacent to each building must be provided ahead of occupation of that building, and retained at all times thereafter for the parking of vehicles.

7.5.2 Protected species

A bat survey has been submitted with the application. Further to a site inspection by a qualified ecologist, the survey concluded that the existing buildings had no or low potential to support a bat roost. No signs of bat activity were found and therefore it is very unlikely that this protected species utilise the depot. However, the bat survey suggests some precautionary measures, which relate to how parts of the depot are dismantled prior to demolition just in case bat are roosting within the existing structures. These should be conditioned accordingly.

7.5.3 Contamination

A geo-environmental report has been submitted with the application. The Contaminated land Officer has reviewed the report and raised no objection subject to 4 standard land contamination conditions. Given that it is not proposed to bring material onto site to raise land levels or the proposed use is likely to cause any contamination, only 2 of the requested conditions should be applied.

7.5.4 Trees

There is a group of protected trees to the north of the application site within the area known as Frontierland. However, there is a considerable level difference between the two sites and as such the proposed works to the application site are not going to affect the root protection areas of these trees. That said, it would be appropriate to require the developer to undertake some sensitive works to these trees' crowns and apply appropriate tree protection measures during construction. It should be noted though, that depending on whether planning permission is granted for this proposal and the associated commencement dates of the consent and Frontierland's planning permission, it may be that these trees will not be in situ when work starts on demolition of the depot as they are due to be removed to facilitate the retail scheme at Frontierland. The condition for tree works and protection is required in case the Frontierland scheme is not implemented or implemented in a different manner, in which case the trees should be appropriately retained.

8.0 Planning Obligations

8.1 There are no planning obligations to consider as part of this application. As this property falls within the Morecambe Area Action Plan area, there is no requirement for affordable housing.

9.0 Conclusions

9.1 This application has been difficult to assess due to the lack of information provided both at the pre-application stage and within the submission relating to the need for this form of residential accommodation. The applicant has not been assisted either due to the lack of information at the current time from Learning Disabilities Commission Managers on the level of demand for such facilities, and if it exists where that demand should be met. Whilst the Housing and Planning Officers have some reservations about the proposal in terms of the housing needs, it is not deemed

substantial enough to sustain a reason for refusal. In all other regards the development is acceptable and therefore the application is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard 3 year timescale
2. Development in accordance with approved plans
3. Prior to demolition – Construction Management Plan, including hours of works (Mon to Fri 0800-1800 and Sat 0800-1400 only), dust control, location of construction parking, equipment, materials, compound and waste, tree works and protection)
4. Prior to demolition – Standard land contamination condition
5. Prior to construction – Materials including colours and finishes (brick, render, tiles, rainwater goods, eaves/soffits/verges, windows, doors, sills/heads/string course)
6. Prior to occupation – Security measures including CCTV, external lighting, boundary treatments and gates, scooter and bin stores
7. Prior to occupation – Landscaping scheme and maintenance
8. Prior to occupation – Dropped kerb and car parking provided for each block and retained at all times thereafter
9. Precautionary measures set out in Section 4 of the Bat Survey
10. Supported living, specialised accommodation for vulnerable adults with disabilities – 24 hour, 7 days a week care to be provided
11. Bunding of tanks

Article 35, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

In accordance with the above legislation, the City Council can confirm the following:

Officers have made the recommendation in a positive and proactive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development, working proactively with the applicant to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The recommendation has been taken having had regard to the impact of development, and in particular to the relevant policies contained in the Development Plan, as presented in full in the officer report, and to all relevant material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance.

Human Rights Act

This recommendation has been reached after consideration of the provisions of The Human Rights Act. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the issues arising do not appear to be of such magnitude 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.

Background Papers

None