

Planning Committee: 09 December 2003
Application No: W20031511

Principal Item Number: 5

Town/Parish Council: Warwick

Registration Date: 24/09/2003
Expiry Date: 19/11/2003

Case Officer: Steven Wallsgrove
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Former Petrol Filling Station, Coten End, Warwick
Erection of 24 Apartments with associated parking.
FOR TEMPLE OAK LTD

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Warwick Town Council: The proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site, which lacks adequate car parking and landscaping and is not in sympathy with development in the area, failing to harmonise with its surroundings and detracting from the amenity of the area by its size and mass.

Warwick Society: We would reiterate the objections made to planning application W20030653 on 17 May which was for a very similar development. We see the proposals for 100 dwellings per hectare on this small site and in this location as too dense. To obtain this density the developer has proposed buildings which are too large and fill the whole area. The tall building proposed for the Coten End frontage, three quarters of which will front directly on to the pavement, will be out of place in the setting of the modest shops and dwellings opposite. The roof line of the block next to No. 24 is higher than that of this listed building and the roofs of the other two blocks are much higher, their height and bulk will overawe this dwelling and have an adverse impact on its setting. The size of the buildings are not redeemed by good architecture. The important facade on Coten End has pastiche Victorian Gothic windows on the centre block and the wings fenestrated with badly proportioned windows, some disappearing into the eaves, all with heavy imitation stone heads and outsized key stones. These applied features are objectionable, they are not integrated into the design of the building nor do they properly reflect other buildings in the vicinity. We also find the design of the main blocks inept in that it is compromised by the "add on" stair and lift wells. This site presents a good opportunity to build something in a refreshing modern style and something that is worthy of Warwick, after all there are precedents close by at Healy Court and Newbury Court. New proposals should include private open areas for the residents.

We ask the Warwick District Planning Committee to refuse planning permission for this application and to invite the developer to submit revised plans at a lower density and having an improved design.

Environment Agency: Advise that the site lies on a major aquifer and that conditions to protect groundwater should be imposed (regarding remediation of the contamination on the site).

Environmental Health Officer: No objection subject to contamination report and remediation.

County Council (Highways): Have no objection, subject to completion of access works, but comment on on-street parking at certain times.

County Council (Planning): Have no objection subject to financial contribution towards libraries and education.

Neighbours: Three letters have been received, two of which comment on parking and consider more should be provided. The other letter notes some discrepancies between the floor plans and elevations and comments on the need for quality details.

RELEVANT POLICIES

The site lies within the town, but adjoining a listed building and the Conservation Area and, therefore, the following policies are applicable:- Structure Plan Policy GD.3 Overall Development Strategy, GD.5 Development Location Priorities and H.3 Land for Housing. Local Plan Policy (DW) H5 Infilling within the towns and (DW) ENV3 Development Principles. Further guidance is given in PPG3 Housing.

In relation to the setting of the listed building, the guidance in PPG15 "Planning and the Historic Environment" is relevant. The applicable Warwick District Local Plan policy is ENV12.

The emerging Local Plan policies, as discussed at the last meeting (11th November), looks for sites such as this to provide 40% social housing.

PLANNING HISTORY

An identical application was withdrawn in June 2003.

KEY ISSUES

The Site and its Location

The site consists of the former filling station and the MOT garage to the rear and has an overall area of 0.28 ha. It has 24 Coten End (a listed building) on the east, a row of shops and offices to the west (behind a service road), Healey Court to the west and the school grounds to the south. It has a 2.3 m high brick wall on the east, south, and part of the west sides.

Details of the Development

The proposal involves the erection of two blocks of flats, one fronting Coten End in line with No. 24, and the other to the rear. The blocks have been designed to vary in height and design with the front block reflecting the character and details of Coten End. This block would be divided into 4 architectural units with the two units adjoining 24 Coten End being two-storey in height (with a single central dormer to the front), the next unit being almost three-storeys in height on the same alignment, and the fourth unit being set back and marginally lower in ridge height. The submitted elevations show that this part would be similar in height to the adjoining, two storey, block of shops and offices on the other side of the access road.

The proposed access road is an improved version of the existing access and will give access to the 24 parking spaces to be provided for the 24 apartments. Half of these spaces would be behind the front block with the other 12 spaces adjoining the boundary with Healey Court, on the site of an existing, tall, workshop.

The rear block is simpler in design, to give more of a 'warehouse' impression, and is divided into three units, each of a different height. The east end of the block is shown as being two-storey (with rooflights) to respect the adjoining listed building and the single storey school building. The central unit would be a full three-storeys in height with the west unit having a lower pitch for its roof but a wider span, giving a lower eaves level (with semi dormers) but a higher ridge. The central and west units would have a projecting, front, staircase/lift tower as a feature.

Assessment

The original scheme was the subject of pre-submission negotiations when the main issues were identified as being the affect on the street scene and the adjoining listed building, affect on neighbours, and parking. The present plans have been amended to provide a larger bin store and cycle store and show side elevations to the entrance wings on the rear block. An additional issue now is that of the provision of social housing.

Coten End has a very varied character with buildings ranging from low, two-storey, timber-framed buildings to three-storey terraces or blocks with an equally wide variety of architectural styles. The older properties are all generally sited on the back of the footway, with only those at the east end having front gardens.

The scheme was designed, therefore, to respect their older historic character since the site lies within that part of Coten End. The front block has, therefore, been sited close to the back of the footway, in the same way as the adjoining listed building, which forms the end of this tighter 'townscape' area. The varied height and design of the block also reflects, and respects, the character of the area and the adjoining listed building, with details (such as window heads and gables) closely following those on existing properties.

It is considered, therefore, that this aspect of the proposal is acceptable and that the details are not badly proportioned, heavy, or outsized. It is also considered that, while a modern design could have been successful, this is no reason to refuse the present design.

The scheme has also been designed to respect the amenities of the neighbours by reducing the height to two-storey beside 24 Coten End (which is shown incorrectly on the elevation since it has a gable end on the site boundary), and being in line with it, while the new block is some 24 metres from its rear elevation. In the case of Healey Court, the existing tall workshop on the boundary would be removed, with the gable end of the new rear, block being some 19 metres away from the flank window of Healey Court. This is considered to be an improvement on the existing situation.

The remaining original principal issue is that of car parking. Since the site is close to the town centre and has good access to public transport, it is considered that the provision of 1 parking space per apartment is acceptable and is within the maximum of 1.5 spaces, on average, advised by the PPG. This aspect is also related to the density of development which, although high (at 85.7 dwellings per hectare), is less than that of Healey Court, which is 158 per hectare. It is also considered that this type of location is appropriate for such high densities and reflects the guidance in PPG3.

The provision of social housing and the making of financial contributions is a more recent issue but the applicants have now confirmed their agreement to providing 40% social housing and the other financial contributions requested. I consider, therefore, that the scheme complies with the policies in the Local Plan, the emerging Local Plan, and all other relevant guidance so that it can now be supported.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be GRANTED as amended, subject to sample materials, boundary treatment, landscaping, car parking, cycle parking, details of bin storage, access and contamination survey conditions after completion of a S106 Agreement relating to social housing and library and education contributions.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

The development is considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Warwick District Local Plan 1995 as set out in the policy section.