

**Planning Committee:** 31 March 2004  
**Application No:** W20021912

**Principal Item Number:** 02

**Town/Parish Council:** Warwick

**Registration Date:** 30/12/2002

**Expiry Date:** 24/02/2003

**Case Officer:** Martin Haslett  
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**WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL DEPOT, ANSELL ROAD, WARWICK**  
Erection of 106 flats in 2, 3, and 4 storey blocks, bin and cycle stores.  
FOR GEORGE WIMPEY

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**SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

**Warwick Town Council:** object- 'size, massing and design of the proposed development does not harmonise with their surroundings. The density of the proposed development is too intensive, without adequate provision of open space areas which will add to the visual amenities of the area. Additionally the size of the development and the reclamation works will lead to the loss of native trees on the site and any development should provide for landscaped areas with native trees if the site is developed.'

**Neighbours:** 4 neighbours object :

- size and bulk of buildings, 4 storeys too high;
- proposals not in conformity with the brief;
- existing and likely future parking problems;
- additional traffic;
- foul sewage problems;
- noise from Club and trains;
- impact on rear access to houses;
- increased light pollution;
- contamination problems, including likely impact of remediation on adjoining residents;
- concern over disturbance from building works.

Two neighbours support the proposals in principle, but consider the buildings to be too high.

**Transco:** no objection.

**E.Midlands Electricity:** no objection.

**WCC(Ecology):** no objection.

**WCC(Footpaths):** no objection, but would prefer to see existing footpath improved.

**WCC(Archaeology):** The proposal lies on part of the site of the Warwick Gasworks, one of the oldest and best-preserved gasworks in the world. The site has been the subject of a programme of archaeological investigation and the buried remains of a series of buildings and surfaces associated with mid-19th century gas production have been identified. Ideally, remains of this importance should be retained in-situ, but in this case, the advice of the Environment Agency on the ground contamination will preclude such a solution being possible. There is therefore no objection to the removal of these remains, but further archaeological work will be required, which should be covered by condition. The work will take the form of a programme of archaeological excavation, to be carried out in advance of decontamination of the site.

**WCC(Highways):** No objection subject to protection of site visibility splays, provision of cycleway/path to Cape Road, the upgrading of the Ansell Way/Saltisford traffic signals and the provision of sustainable transport 'welcome packs'.

**WCC(Fire and Rescue):** no objection, subject to provision of hydrants.

Ramblers' Assoc: no objection but would prefer to see fencing to footpath reduced in height.

**Environmental Health:** the land is seriously contaminated and remediation will be required. Conditions are recommended to deal with this.

**Severn Trent Water:** no objection, subject to conditions on surface and foul sewer provision.

**Warwick Society:** principle welcomed, but 4-storey blocks too bulky and out of sympathy with gas works buildings, leper hospital and new church. Three storey buildings with room in roof would be more appropriate.

**Environment Agency:** no objection in principle, but final list of conditions awaited.

**WDC Housing:** after negotiations, the applicants have offered an affordable housing contribution of 20%, which consists of an on-site allocation of 15 units and a commuted sum of £215,000. Taking into account the financial appraisal submitted by the applicant and the risks of developing this particular site, the Housing Officer considers that there are particular circumstances sufficient to justify the lower level of affordable provision.

## **RELEVANT POLICIES**

(DW) ENV12 - Protection of the Setting of Listed Buildings (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

(DW) ENV3 - Development Principles (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

Distance Separation (Supplementary Planning Guidance)

DP7 - Traffic Generation (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DP8 - Parking (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

SC9 - Affordable Housing (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DP5 - Density (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

UAP1 - Directing New Housing (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

DAP6 - Protection of Listed Buildings (Warwick District 1996 - 2011 First Deposit Version)

Saltisford Warwick Planning Brief, February 2001. The brief anticipates employment uses for this land.

## **PLANNING HISTORY**

The site was for many years part of the Council's depot and there were many previous applications connected with this use.

## **KEY ISSUES**

### **The Site and its Location**

The site includes that part of the former Council depot situated on the south-eastern side

of Ansell Way and includes land to the rear of the former gasworks building in Saltisford, but not the former gasworks buildings themselves. The land has now been unused for some time. The site is, in part, owned by the District Council.

At the far end of Ansell Way is the working men's club, which is also excluded from the application site. The land wraps around the end of the club buildings so as to have a short frontage onto Cape Road. To the east lie Victorian houses in Albert Street, which are on slightly higher land and are separated from the application site by a rear access lane. Finally, the site adjoins the fire station at the southern end of Albert Street. Land on the other side of Ansell Way is also an old, now disused Council depot.

The land is fairly flat, and much of it is presently hard-surfaced. There is a gas valve compound in the centre of the site which will need to be moved, and the site is traversed by a public footpath.

### **Details of the Development**

It is proposed to use the land for residential purposes, in a development consisting of 2, 3 and 4-storey flats, of one or 2 bedrooms. These would form a mainly 4-storey built frontage to Ansell Way with corner towers to reflect the design of the adjoining gasworks building. The design has a considerable variation in ridge lines and eaves lines, together with the use of dormer windows and attics, which help to give variety to the elevations. Low railings would form the boundary of the site with Ansell Way.

Further 4 storey blocks of flats would be constructed leading back to the boundary with the rear of properties in Albert Street. Where the development adjoins this boundary, the height of the blocks would be reduced to two or three storeys, so as to protect the residential amenities of the houses in Albert Street. At its closest point, the three storey flats (where there are kitchen and bathroom windows to the rear) would be at 26m separation from the nearest windows of properties in Albert Street. Another two 4 storey blocks are reduced to three storeys where they have blank gable ends siding onto the boundary with properties in Albert Street, the minimum distances in these cases being 27m and 30m.

The remaining parts of the site would be used for car parking at the rate of one space for each flat, the site would be landscaped and the gas valve would be moved underground. A combined cycle/walkway would be provided to Cape Road, in order to promote sustainable transport, and this link would also act as an emergency access into the site.

The proposals have been completely amended since original submission.

### **Assessment**

The first issue to consider is that of policy.

The brief for the wider area of Saltisford, prepared in 2001, anticipated that this area should be developed for employment purposes to meet the need identified in the

Structure Plan for smaller employment sites. This was part of an overall approach to secure the co-ordinated development of the Saltisford area, including the whole of the former Council depot site together with adjacent parcels of land. One of these parcels is the land occupied by the listed Masters House (The Leper Hospital).

Since the production of the brief, this proposal to develop this part of the site has come forward as part of a package to revise the original approach to development of this area. This package includes both residential development on this site and allows the potential for some additional employment development at the rear of the Masters House which in turn would link with the repair and refurbishment of the listed buildings. If this package could be achieved, it would result in a significant enhancement to this part of Warwick. The achievement of housing on the present site is an integral part of this package. What has to be recognised, however, is that there is no formal planning link that can be put in place to ensure that the package is achieved, nor can any commitment be given to the securing of planning permission on any other part of the site, as all other applications will need to be determined on their merits. Whilst it would have been preferable for all relevant applications to come before committee at the same time, they are at present at various stages of consultation. However, consideration of the present application is otherwise complete in terms of site specific issues and it is appropriate to bring it before committee at this time.

Whilst the above background is of note, it cannot be considered material in planning terms to the current proposal. The application must be considered on its own planning merits and it must be understood that while the proposals form a key part of the package, a grant of planning permission in itself cannot guarantee that the whole package will be achieved.

In relation to planning policy, the application site has now been allocated as part of a wider employment allocation for the Saltisford area in the First Draft of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 (policy SSP1e). This reflects the allocations made in the planning brief. This is an important material consideration and in all normal circumstances it would be appropriate for development to conform with its requirements. However, in this instance, the opportunity to secure an improved environment to the rear of Albert Street is a circumstance that is appropriate to weigh in favour of this current scheme.

Given that the Highway Authority is satisfied with the traffic aspects of the proposals, the principal remaining issues to be considered are the impact of the development on the setting of the adjoining listed building (the old gasworks) and the impact on the adjoining residents in Albert Street.

The gasworks buildings are of very considerable historic importance and visually they form an important part of the approach into the town. The current situation, with a derelict yard to the rear of the buildings is most unsatisfactory and there are considerable opportunities for the setting of the building to be improved. The proposed flats have been designed with corner towers to reflect the design of the gasworks and although the development will be dense and will mean considerable change to this part of town, I consider that the setting of the listed building will be improved.

The proposals would also have a considerable impact upon the residents of Albert Street, although there are also opportunities here for improvement as the Council yard

has been a source of complaints over many years. The development proposed is at a much greater density than the adjoining properties and there will clearly be some effect upon them, from the proximity of the new buildings and new parking areas. The distance separation standards are difficult to apply given the change in land levels, and this issue has to be balanced with the considerable improvement brought about by the removal of the derelict depot. Overall, I consider that the proposals are not unreasonable in this respect.

There remains the issue of affordable housing, which has been the subject of negotiation with the Housing Strategy Development Officer. Government advice, given in Circular 6/98 is that where 'there will be particular costs associated with development of the site,' this is a factor to be taken into account in determining the rate of affordable housing provision. In the case of this site, the decontamination of the land and the archaeological requirements are major additional costs which need to be taken into account. The Housing Strategy Development Officer is satisfied that the compromise reached is a reasonable one.

A grant of planning permission would need to be the subject of a legal agreement to secure the affordable housing and for sustainable transport welcome packs.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That permission be GRANTED, as amended, subject to conditions on large scale design details (including bin and cycle stores, railings), materials, landscaping, boundary treatment, treatment of footpath boundaries, archaeological investigation, highways conditions (including visibility splays, provision and use of cycleway/path and emergency access to Cape Road, and upgrading of the Ansell Way/Saltisford traffic signals), provision of fire hydrants, land contamination remediation conditions, provision of foul and surface water sewers, and Environment Agency requirements, after completion of a legal agreement to secure affordable housing and sustainable transport welcome packs.

### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The proposal is considered to comply with the following policies:

(DW) ENV12 - Protection of the Setting of Listed Buildings (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

(DW) ENV3 - Development Principles (Warwick District Local Plan 1995)

Distance Separation (Supplementary Planning Guidance)

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