

MINUTES OF MEETING

Warwick District Conservation Advisory Forum

Thursday 3rd November 2022

14:30 via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Cllr George Illingworth
Cllr Carolyn Gifford

Mr Gordon Cain (RICS)
Dr Christine Hodgetts (Warwickshire Gardens Trust)
Mr Angus Kaye (The Victorian Society)
Ms Cathy Kimberley (CPRE)
Mr James Mackay (20th Century Society)
Ms Gill Smith (The Warwick Society)
Mr Mark Sullivan (RTPI)
Ms Susan Rasmussen (The Leamington Society)

Ms Jane Catterall (WDC)

Apologies:

Mr Robert Dawson (WDC)
Mr Richard Ward (RIBA)

1. **Substitutes and New Members**

Ms Susan Rasmussen was welcomed to the committee as the new representative of The Leamington Society.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Minutes of Last Meeting** (6 October 2022)

Were agreed.

4. **Planning Committee Agenda**

No comment.

5. Planning Applications

5.1 W/22/1546 – Demolition of existing building and erection an apartment building comprising 8 units – 16 Cross Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 4PX

It was agreed by forum members that whilst the current building was of no considerable architectural value, it is modest in size and scale, and a historic component of the variable character of Cross Street, reflective of this area's past as a Mews Road. The proposed design for the replacement building was considered by forum members as too grand and too large for a mews road, attempting to be reflective of the lavish houses that would have fronted the main streets rather than the coach houses and ancillary structures which would have been found on this rear road. The forum agreed that two storeys would be far more in keeping with the character of the road and that too many flats were being proposed for too little space, with the ambitions and design of the proposal disregarding the historic 'mews' nature of the location within the conservation area.

It was also noted by the Forum that this is a single aspect building which faces north-west, with the south facing elevation almost blank. Whilst the inclusion of the lightwells to the rear was noted, concerns regarding air flow, heat management and light to the building were raised. It was also noted that Imperial House, which surrounds the plot, has been vacant and will likely be scheduled for redevelopment, at which time the blank rear aspect of this development would look very strange.

The 'car free' development was welcomed by some members as a bold commitment to sustainability, however others questioned how rigorously this would be enforced. It was also noted by a member that the promoted green space to the front of the proposal, small as it is, would actually be out of character for a Mews Road, as such areas would historically be paved. It was positively remarked, however, that the refuse and cycle storage areas had been shielded away from the road.

Overall, the Forum objected to the proposal as it is considered harmful to the character of the conservation area, as the design, size and scale are not reflective of the history of the area as a mews road, and its single north-west facing aspect raises concern when considering potential living conditions.

5.2 Revised plans: W/22/0463 – Demolition of cadet hut and storage building; erection of a building consisting of six residential flats and basement cadet facilities, parking areas and all associated works (Please note amended description and design) – Land adjacent, 9 Clarendon Place, Leamington Spa, CV32 5QL

CAF has previously considered the initial design for this proposal (June 2022) and the Forum was encouraged by the submission of a radically different design that addressed a number of the issues raised. Whilst the Forum agreed that progress had been made, it was felt that the design was still not quite suitable.

Forum representatives noted that the design needed to decide on the grammar of the fenestration, as there were currently elements of both Regency and Victorian detailing which resulted in a confused façade. Members disagreed on the suitability of drawing reference from the Victorian villas opposite, however it was noted that these were an important infill development which illustrate the historic narrative the town's expansion and reflected the changing architectural trends from grand Regency terraces, which left incomplete due to bankruptcy, evolved into elaborate Victorian villas.

In terms of design, it was questioned whether a parapet to minimise the impact of the roof-area fenestration would be more appropriate. Concerns were raised about the roof area, which was considered to be somewhat masquerading as two pitches but continued to read as a mansard-style block, with the use of dormers heavily criticised. The fenestration to the upper level of the rear gable, including the proposed balcony, was considered too fussy and overwhelming for this area of the building and should be restrained, or in the case of the balcony, removed altogether.

Overall, the Forum commended the willingness of the applicants to work with suggestions that were being proposed which has resulted in a greatly improved scheme but it was noted that there was still further progress to be made and that, in its current form, the design would still be inappropriate for this important location within the conservation area.

6. **Any Other Business**

A Forum Representative raised concerns regarding unlawful access to the old King's High site in the centre of Warwick. Fears were raised over potential fire and vandalism which could result in the loss of heritage assets and irreversible harm to the conservation area, due to the vacant nature of the site and regular trespassing which has been observed.

A Forum Member enquired as to an update regarding archaeological finds and works to the Abbey Fields site. Ms J Catterall agreed to enquire with WCC Archaeological Services as to whether further information could be provided.

Date of next meeting: 1st December 2022

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