

DELEGATED

AGENDA NO .

UPDATE REPORT

**PLANNING COMMITTEE
31st JANUARY 2007**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR
OF DEVELOPMENT AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES.**

06/3578/FUL

**45 - 53 DOVECOT STREET, STOCKTON-ON-TEES, TS18 1LJ
DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING AND ERECTION OF 1 NO. RETAIL UNIT
WITH 36 NO. STUDENT FLATS ABOVE.
EXPIRY DATE: 23rd FEBRUARY 2007**

Summary:

Since the previous report to members of the planning committee additional comments have been received from English Heritage and also from the Council's Historic Buildings Officer in response to the comments made by English Heritage.

These comments are detailed within the update report

Consultations

1. The following Consultees were notified and any comments they made are below

English Heritage

We continue to have concerns about the design quality of the proposal. We consider that the proposed scheme will have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the conservation area and upon the setting of neighbouring listed buildings. We would urge your Council to strive for higher design quality in this location and to refuse the application.

1. The photomontage images have done little to allay our previously stated concerns about the design quality of the proposed scheme. In our view, the architectural treatment and detailing of the elevations is naïve and lacks the necessary integrity and coherence in this location. The proposed palette of external construction materials is not sympathetic to the prevalent traditional materials of buildings in the local area, and will not firmly root the proposal in its setting.

2. In our view, the proposal does not achieve the high standard of design we discussed with the applicant at the meeting in August, and will be an intrusive addition to the townscape. The need for high architectural quality is particularly acute in this location given the modest scale of the existing buildings on and adjoining the site; a taller building needs to possess a critical level of architectural distinction in order to ensure that it will not harm the immediate and wider context, but rather enhances it.

Recommendation

We would urge your Council to strive for higher design quality in this location, particularly in the light of emerging intentions to initiate heritage-led regeneration across the city and to secure the future of key historic buildings (including the neighbouring Brunswick Methodist Chapel in Dovecot Street) through heritage funding. We therefore recommend that the application be refused.

Historic Buildings Officer

Further to my previous comments. I would respond to the recent comments received from English Heritage as follows.

The applicant has taken on board the previous concerns and comments of both English Heritage and planning officers and has arrived at the current design which has been greatly reduced the bulk and massing of the building which was previously the main concern of officers.

Although it is accepted that the building is not of exceptional design quality the proposal needs to be considered in terms of its proposed replacement of a modest building of limited architectural quality in a street scene where properties are collectively of a larger scale and of varying architectural types and quality.

The proposal cannot be considered in isolation and Dovecot Street and surrounding streets are particularly in need of regeneration and suffer from various social problems. The proposal needs to be looked at in its wider regeneration context in an area of social deprivation and growing interest in the area from private developers.

PPS 1 states that although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are clearly factors in achieving good design, securing high quality and inclusive design goes far beyond aesthetic considerations

It goes further to state that design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles.

PPG 15 states clearly that: new buildings should be carefully designed to respect their setting, follow fundamental architectural principles of scale, height, massing and alignment, and use appropriate materials. This does not mean that new buildings have to copy their older neighbours in detail: some of the most interesting streets in our towns and villages include a variety of building styles, materials, and forms of construction, of many different periods, but together forming a harmonious group”.

My previous comments of the 22nd of January outline why I consider the in terms of scale massing and positioning within the street scene.

In context with the existing building on site and the guidance set out in both PPS 1 and PPG 15 I have no objection to the proposal, subject to appropriate conditions to control the palette of external building materials.

Material Planning Considerations

Impact on the character of the area.

2. As stated within the original report to members of the planning committee there are a range of building styles and sizes some of which are historic and have listed building status along Dovecot Street. The design follows the outcome of discussions with the Local Planning Authorities planning and historic buildings officers as well as discussions over the broad design principles with an officer from English Heritage.
3. Whilst English Heritage may continue to have design concerns over the visual appearance of the building, both the case officer and Historic Buildings officer are satisfied that the proposed development is appropriate in terms of its scale and massing and would replace a modest building of limited architectural quality.
4. In broader planning terms the scheme is judged to be in accordance with both PPS1 and PPG15 and would at the very least have a neutral impact on this part of the conservation area. It is therefore considered that there is not sufficient enough justification on design grounds to refuse the application, particularly as the scale and massing is considered to be appropriate.
5. Concerns over the use of materials and over the colour scheme for the building can be addressed via planning condition.
6. Given the above it is considered that the proposed development is visually acceptable and would not be in direct conflict with local plan policy GP1 or.

Conclusion.

7. In conclusion it is considered that despite English Heritage's late objection to the proposed development the Local Planning Authorities officers consider that the overall design composition of the proposal is acceptable in terms of its scale and massing and also in terms of its treatment. The design reflects to a certain extent the nearby Arc and it is considered that the scheme will at worst have a neutral impact on the area as a whole, in accordance with PPG15.

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