

Item No. 7

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/11/03833/CA
LOCATION	Hillside, 32 Sundon Road, Harlington, Dunstable, LU5 6LS
PROPOSAL	Demolition of 2 dwellings and re-development of site for 2 No. One bed dwellings, 4 no. Two bed dwellings, 4 no. Three bed dwellings, 2 no. Four bed dwellings and 1 no. Five bed dwelling, with associated garaging and parking.
PARISH	Harlington
WARD	Toddington
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Costin & Nicols
CASE OFFICER	Mark Spragg
DATE REGISTERED	11 November 2011
EXPIRY DATE	06 January 2012
APPLICANT	Hearne Holmes Developments
AGENT	Triad Planning & Design Ltd
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	An unresolved Parish Council objection to a major application. Deferred from the Council's Development Management Committee of 19th September 2012 to allow consultation with English Heritage.
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Conservation Area - Granted

Site Location:

This application site comprises an area of 0.40 hectares of greenfield land, located to the west of Sundon Road, within the village of Harlington. The eastern part of the site, fronting Sundon Road, lies within the Conservation Area, and currently includes 2 No. two storey dwellings contained within a large Edwardian building and a single storey ancillary building previously used as a farm shop, located immediately to the west of the dwellings. Sundon Road is characterised by modest buildings of differing though traditional vernacular styles.

The site is served by a main access in the north east part of the site, and a secondary access in the south east corner, both accessing onto Sundon Road.

A public footpath, under the ownership of the current landowner, runs along the northern boundary of the site, beyond which is the car park serving the Carpenters Arms Public House and the rear garden of 5 Oak Close. To the west of the site are the rear gardens of No's 6-12 Oak Close, part of a modern housing development, whilst the southern boundary of the site abuts the Methodist Church and the rear gardens of No's 6 and 7 Shepherds Close.

The site has a number of trees located predominantly within the eastern part of the site, with evergreen hedging around the north, west and southern boundaries.

The site rises gently from west to east and from south to north, whilst the site itself is located in an elevated position in relation to Sundon Road.

The Application:

This application for Conservation Area consent was previously reported to the Council's Development Management Committee on 19th September 2012, along with the application for planning permission (CB.11/03832/FULL). Both items were deferred to allow consultation with English Heritage whom it was identified should have been consulted as the development site area exceeded the 1000sqm trigger, above which there is a requirement to consult English Heritage.

Conservation Area consent is sought for demolition of the existing buildings on site, which include a 19th century 2-storey brick house with concrete tile and a single-storey modern brick building. The application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement.

Relevant Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009)

CS15 (Heritage)

DM13 (Heritage in Development)

Supplementary Planning Guidance DS5 – The Historic Environment

Planning History

MB/90/01609/FA Erection of new grocery shop and storage area. Approved.

MB/92/00942/FA Erection of two storey side/rear extension and alterations to form attached granny annexe. Approved.

MB/97/00911/FA Change of use of shop to residential garage/outbuilding. Approved.

Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)

Harlington Parish
Council

Object to the application. The comments are summarised as follows:

Object to the application. The initial comments and further comments since the previous committee are summarised as follows:

- Sundon Road has safety issues due to the restricted road width and narrow footpath which would be exacerbated by the development.
- The site sits along Sundon Road between 2 bends where the road is narrow and accidents occur.
- Sundon Rd is a designated Safer Route to School.
- With more traffic at peak times there will be an increased risk to the children
- The size and density of development would adversely affect the streetscene and be detrimental to the Conservation Area.
- Would be an overdevelopment of such an open site.
- The site is within a rural area and not an urban area.
- Concerns about removal of trees and affect to wildlife and amenities of Oak Close.
- The proposal will impact on listed buildings around the site.
- There are known to be bats in the vicinity of the site.
- Possible drainage issues.
- Inadequate car parking and impact on the surrounding streets which already suffer from commuter parking.
- Impact on the streetscene due to the proposed building heights onto Sundon Road and Oak Close.
- Loss of amenity to Oak Close.
- Inaccuracies in the plans in respect of materials and siting of adjoining houses in Oak Close.
- Emergency and refuse vehicles will not be able to access the site and this will result in bins being pushed onto Sundon Road for emptying.
- The appropriate consultation process was not taken before taking the application to Development Management Committee.

Object on the following grounds

- incompatibility with the adjacent listed buildings.
- Impact on character of the Conservation area

Harlington Society

15 letters of objection were reported to the application, including 5 letters of objection received since the previous Development Management Committee. The comments made are summarised as follows:

Neighbours

- Highway safety issues along Sundon Road due to the busy road and narrow footway.
- Inadequate visibility at the accesses.

- Insufficient parking.
- Overdevelopment.
- Density out of keeping with the Conservation Area.
- Overbearing impact of houses due to them being built at a higher level.
- Drainage issues.
- Impact on privacy of 10, 11 Oak Close and 27 Sundon Road due to the higher level of the proposed houses.
- Overbearing impact on 27 Sundon Road
- Impact on light to 5 Oak Close
- Bats have been seen in the area.
- Impact of additional noise to properties in Oak Close.
- Concern about the loss of hedges along the Oak Close boundary.
- The adjacent public footpath should remain as such.
- On site work should take account of the adjacent Methodist Church.
- Concern regarding access for emergency vehicles

Consultations

English Heritage

“In the view of English Heritage, only the original late Victorian/Edwardian house on the site is of any interest, and while that dwelling has had a number of alterations and extensions over the years, it retains sufficient interest to continue to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, though that harm may be considered to be less than substantial harm as set out in the NPPF, in which case it would be necessary to weigh the harm against the wider benefits arising from the application (as required by paragraph 134 of the NPPF)”.

“In our opinion the documentation supporting the application fails to properly assess the contribution made by the open garden, trees and the front boundary hedge to the significance of the conservation area. We conclude that the garden makes a very substantial contribution and its loss to the intensive development would result in harm. The garden is particularly important when approaching from the south. From this direction there are views over the mature beech hedge and across the site to a substantial tree sited on the footpath that adjoins the northern boundary. The intensive nature of the redevelopment would completely remove the open, green interlude that the garden currently provides in this part of the conservation area, and it is impossible to see how the proposals would either preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such, English Heritage

must question the whole principle of this development and cannot agree with the claims made in the supporting documentation”.

“Recommendation:

Hillside and its garden both make a contribution to the character and appearance of the Harlington Conservation Area. In the case of the garden, the contribution is substantial.

The demolition of Hillside and the intensive redevelopment of the site would result in harm to the significance of the conservation area and paragraph 134 of the NPPF requires that harm to be weighed against the wider public benefits arising from the proposal. In this instance the public benefits would include the provision of a maximum of 3 affordable homes. However, given the importance of this open space to the conservation area, English Heritage would ask that the LPA gives very careful consideration as to whether the benefits would truly outweigh the harm, especially if alternative sites might be identified for the provision of affordable housing. In the event that the LPA considers that the harm would not be outweighed by the wider public benefits then we would expect both applications to be refused”.

Conservation Officer

No objection to demolition of the building. The existing buildings have been unsympathetically extended in a piecemeal fashion which has led to a mix of different styles and inappropriate materials which have diluted their architectural quality. As such the building is considered to make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Further to the above comments, previously reported to committee the Council's Conservation Officer considers that English Heritage overstate the positive aspects of the existing character and quality of both the existing Edwardian house (regarded as more neutral rather than a positive heritage asset) and this part of the Conservation Area.

Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are:

1. Impact of demolition on the Conservation Area.

Considerations

1. Impact of demolition on the Conservation Area

Sundon Road is characterised by rows of modest buildings in a mix of differing traditional vernacular styles. The 1972 Conservation Area Statement describes the road as, *“curving... with a jumble of roofs, informally placed buildings and constantly changing views up and downhill”*. There is a strong sense of enclosure, particularly as one moves down the hill from the village hall, due to the close grouping and positioning of built development along the curving road, particularly on the east side. When the Conservation Area was first designated in 1972, the open site boasted

views of the wider open countryside setting of the Conservation Area. However, in the opinion of the Conservation Officer this has been greatly marred by later development along the eastern boundary of the site which has completely enclosed the site and cut off views of the countryside beyond, thus considerably diluting the sites contribution to the historic character.

The existing main building dates back to the early 19th century and is considered to be an undesignated heritage asset. The original part of it is at the rear and has white painted brickwork and a concrete tiled roof. The property was extended at the front during the 20th century with a two storey bay fronted gable extension. More recently the property has also been extended by a single storey rear extension. A modern brick and concrete tiled bungalow type building exists behind the main dwelling.

The building is neither listed nor has it been acknowledged as being of any local interest and such brings no particular architectural merit to the Conservation Area. The Conservation Officer considers that the features of the site which do make a considerable positive contribution to the enclosed character and historic grain of the Conservation Area are the ironstone boundary wall and hedge along the front boundary of the site which follows the established building line of this side of the street. Both these features were highlighted in the 1972 Conservation Area Statement as important features of Sundon Road and continue to have an important presence in the street scene.

In contrast, English Heritage consider that the main house Hillside makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and that its demolition would result in substantial harm. In contrast the Council's Conservation Officer is of the opinion that English Heritage overstate the positive aspects of the house, considering it to be plain and to be of average interest and not special interest and to have a neutral rather than a positive heritage asset. The Conservation Officer considers that the house has been unsympathetically extended and has a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Officer considers that there is insufficient significance to require its retention. The Conservation Officer has no objection to demolition of the buildings and their replacement with an appropriate development provided that the sense of enclosure provided by the boundary wall and hedging along the Sundon Road frontage is retained.

It is apparent that there is a clear difference of opinion between the Council's own Conservation Officer and English Heritage as to the importance of the house and its setting. It is therefore necessary to balance the points made by both consultees in coming to a view. On the one hand our own Conservation Officer considers that the existing house is of a neutral rather than positive asset and considers the wall and hedging to be the important aspect of the Conservation. On the other hand English Heritage consider that the main property makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. In their comments English Heritage go on to state that, 'Its [main house] demolition would therefore result in some harm to the conservation area, that harm may be considered to be less than substantial harm as set out in the NPPF, in which case it would be necessary to weigh the harm against the wider benefits arising from the application (as required by paragraph 134 of the NPPF)'.

Undesignated heritage assets are covered in paragraph 135 & 136 of the NPPF:

Para 135: The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset;

Para. 136: Local planning authorities should not permit loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

Para 134 states: Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

The Conservation Officer's view is that the main house is neutral in its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and that its loss would lead to a less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Whilst the views of English Heritage are noted it is also relevant to note that the proposal would include the provision of 4 affordable houses and a net gain of 11 houses in a sustainable location tightly constrained by further development by the surrounding Green Belt boundary. In weighing these public benefits against the loss of the dwelling it is considered that they weigh in favour of the demolition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed demolition of the existing building is on balance considered acceptable and would not harm the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area, subject to its demolition being followed by the accompanying proposed redevelopment.

- 1 The development hereby approved shall be commenced within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to ensure that this consent does not continue in existence indefinitely if the development to which it relates is not carried out.

- 2 This consent relates only to the details shown on plans 11-734-P-01F, 02C, 03C, 04C, 05D, 06C, 07D, 08D, 09D, 10D, 11C, 13B, 14A, 15A, 16A or to any subsequent appropriately endorsed revised plan.

Reason: To identify the approved plan/s and to avoid doubt.

- 3 The demolition works hereby approved shall only be carried out in connection with the redevelopment of the site as permitted by planning permission reference CB/11/03832/FULL and the two permissions shall be implemented as a single continuous development scheme.

Reason: To ensure that an unsightly cleared site is not created to the detriment of the character and amenities of the area

Reasons for Granting

The proposal to demolish the existing buildings in connection with the development proposed in planning application CB/11/03832/FULL would preserve the Harlington Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore in conformity with The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 126), which relates to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, and policies CS15 and DM13 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy.

It is further in conformity with the technical guidance Design in Central Bedfordshire, a Guide for Development.

Notes to Applicant