

FREEMANTLE CAPITAL PARTNERS (WELLINGTON) LTD

Conversion with various internal and external alterations into 4 No. town houses at 4 and 5 Cornhill, Wellington

Location: 4 AND 5 CORNHILL, WELLINGTON, TA21 8LU

Grid Reference: 313798.120573

Listed Building Consent: Works

Recommendation

Recommended decision: Conditional Approval

Recommended Conditions (if applicable)

1. The works for which consent is hereby granted shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended by S51(4) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

to be completed for the update sheet

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Prior to commissioning, specific details of the following shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, with such approved details being strictly adhered to in the implementation of the approved works, unless any variation thereto is first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority: external materials; window/doors; details of air extraction, works for compliance with Part L of the Building Regulations.

Reason: To ensure the use of materials and details appropriate to the character of the Listed Building.

4. The chimney breasts/fireplaces; wall plaster; lath and plaster ceilings; and ceiling beams should be retained.

Reason: To ensure that features of historic or architectural interest are preserved.

5. No roof timbers should be altered or removed without the further approval of listed building consent.

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Notes to Applicant

Proposal

This application seeks listed building consent for internal and external alterations at 4 and 5 Cornhill, Wellington. The alterations will enable the buildings to be converted into townhouses..

Site Description

This application relates to two mid-terraced properties on Cornhill, a narrow street that runs between Fore Street and North Street. The buildings, along with their unlisted neighbours are in a relatively poor state of repair.

Relevant Planning History

Listed building consent was granted in 2012 to convert the buildings into retail units with flats above. The permission has now lapsed (ref: 43/11/0084).

Consultation Responses

WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL - Recommend that planning permission is granted.

HERITAGE - The listed buildings at 4-5 Cornhill are “at Risk” and in a poor state of repair. The proposed plan form of the buildings is improved from the previous consent and the existing plan form is largely retained, and some reinstated, from the existing form. Although the shop frontages are not to be reinstated the overall plan will benefit the listed buildings. The opportunity to secure the long term future of these buildings will be welcomed. There is a marked improvement from the

previous planning application where the buildings has retail and apartment provision by reducing the intervention in the listed buildings. This layout has also been improved during pre-app discussions.

No 3 and 6 Cornhill are not included in the listed building application but enhance the setting of the listed buildings. They are noted as unlisted buildings of merit in the Conservation Area and should be considered to be heritage assets. Although the fabric of no. 3 Cornhill is due to be demolished due to the deterioration of the existing fabric the presence and form of the building contributes to the setting of the listed buildings. There is more surviving fabric present in no.6 and is due to be retained which is positive to the Conservation Area. This scheme neglects to include a pedestrian walkway through the site (through historic carriageway) which is a positive enhancement to the scheme in heritage terms.

Considering the recommendations from the previous Conservation Officer report and during pre-app discussion the following points are noted:

- The stairs, chimney breasts/fireplaces; wall plaster; lath and plaster ceilings and ceiling beams should be retained.
- The shop windows must be repaired and retained in situ.
- The fenestration to the rear of the property should retain the pattern and proportion of the existing openings.
- Should the render be removed the original positions of doors windows and other features of interest must be recorded and given consideration, if appropriate, given to their reinstatement.
- The existing staircases should be remodelled and missing staircase inserted into the appropriate location.
- The historic doors recorded in the Architectural appraisal to be retained.

These are all details that can be controlled by condition.

HISTORIC ENGLAND -

Significance

The proposed development site is located within the centre of Wellington Conservation Area, currently identified as a Conservation Area *at Risk*. The site is bound by the historic routes of Fore Street, Cornhill and North Street and retains a back-land character, being made up of the rear plots of the principle buildings along the aforementioned streets. A number of these properties are listed at grade II, while many of the others have been identified as buildings that provide a positive contribution to the conservation area.

The site is located within Zone 1 of the conservation area appraisal's identified character areas. The area had formed the medieval core of Wellington but underwent extensive growth and redevelopment in the 18th and 19th century through the commercial expansion of the town. Although many of the early buildings were lost, vestiges of the medieval layout remained through the survival of the burgage plots.

These can still be seen through the delineation of the boundary walls and ancillary

buildings that reinforce the town's urban grain.

The proposed site is overgrown but does contain vestiges of the former burgage plots and ancillary buildings. The principle character is green and lush reflecting its former use as a garden but also contains a number of functional buildings reflecting its role as an ancillary space to the principle buildings. This sense of hierarchy is still clearly read from the publically accessible car-park that borders the site. The sense of privacy and intimacy of these rear plots is also appreciated in views from the car-park due to the sense of enclosure created by the surrounding buildings and strong boundary line.

Background

Consent was granted in 2012 for the redevelopment of the site. Historic England commented on the scheme at the time and raised a number of points that required further consideration. Our main concern was the demolition of the ancillary buildings and loss of boundaries that would result in the erosion of the character and appearance of the area.

Impact

The demolition of the ancillary buildings and the boundary walls that delineate the former burgage plots will result in significant harm to the conservation area through the erosion of a surviving feature of the settlement's early development. This is an important feature in terms of the archaeology of the settlement as well as the resulting impact on the surviving townscape and urban grain.

If the case can be made for the demolition of these buildings, further consideration needs to be given to the layout, massing and design of the proposed development to ensure that it preserve or enhanced the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The linear nature of the structures does look to follow the existing strong grain held within the conservation area, although could better respond to the former bargage plots. We would encourage the buildings to be set back from the main range of buildings along Fore Street, many are listed and consideration will need to be given to their setting.

In terms of scale and massing of the new development, this responds to the sense of hierarchy within the site. The new build remains subservient to the principle structures.

We were not wholly convinced by the end ranges of the blocks containing units 7 – 14 and units 15 - 23. However, these are within the footprint of the overall depth of the range and could be accommodated if the design is appropriate.

In terms of the design approach, the proposal is for domestic ranges of terraced housing. The character of the area is back-land, articulated with ancillary and functional structures with a connection to the garden. The scheme needs to reflect these qualities within the design and we are not convinced at present that this has been achieved due to the overtly domestic appearance and the hard landscaping associated with the associated car-parking.

Part of the heritage benefits offered by the scheme, is the repair of the grade II listed pair of cottages (4 & 5 Cornhill - List Entry Number 1344794). As it is grade II listed, we do not wish to offer detailed comments but would highlight the need for the new works to sympathetically respond to surviving internal features in order to allow the conversion to be sensitively achieved. This includes chimney breasts and staircases.

We are pleased that the walls along the boundary of the current passageway are being retained without any further interventions. Where we consider further thought will need to be provided is the entrance into the site from the car-park. The area has retained a sense of intimacy and privacy due to the back-land character and the sense of enclosure from the surrounding buildings and boundary walls. Therefore the approach to the point of access into the site needs careful consideration in order to respect the character of this area. It needs to create a clear transition from the open and public character of the car park to the more intimate sense of place within the proposed development site. At present this has not been demonstrated and raises concern.

Policy and Position

As the application affects a conservation area, the council has a statutory requirement to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area (s.72(1), Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

In our view the demolition of the outbuildings and structures including walls within the site will result in harm through the loss of the evidence they provide for the development of the settlement of Wellington and the positive contribution they make to the urban grain, the sense of hierarchy within the town. The council need to be satisfied that the justification for the loss of these structures has been clear and convincingly demonstrated (Para 194, NPPF).

In terms of the proposed development, this needs to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area as required under national legislation as well as the NPPF (Chapter 12). We consider that further attention should be given to the overall design approach to address their overly domestic appearance and to reflect the greater ancillary and functional quality of the area. This needs to be balanced against the requirement for a robust landscaping scheme that will help retain some of the positive qualities of the site through its role as garden.

The other issue that needs addressing is the point of arrival. There needs to be a clear distinction and change of character at the point of access from the car park. The site holds a sense of intimacy and privacy, which needs to be retained within the design.

At present, we have concerns that the development is unable to satisfy the majority of the requirements of Para 127, NPPF through the current design response. Consequently, it will be unable to meet the requirements of Para 200 in terms of preserving or better revealing the significance of the asset.

Further steps should be taken within the design approach to address the points

raised above and to ensure that the scheme responds positively to the conservation area.

This should look to address the requirements of Para 190, NPPF, where conflict between development and the conservation of the heritage asset is identified steps should be taken to avoid or minimise the harm identified.

The current scheme in our view will result in harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This harm needs to be considered against the public benefits of the scheme, which should demonstrably outweigh the harm identified (Para 196, NPPF). Public benefit can include conservation gains and we would encourage ways in which elements of the surviving buildings and structures could be reused within the scheme.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the applications on heritage grounds. Harm will be caused by the loss of the ancillary structures within the back-land area. Consequently, any new development should look to enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. At present, we are not convinced that the development through the design of the new builds, the landscaping or the access responses to the significance of the asset: an area characterised by gardens, functional utilitarian structures and a sense of intimacy and privacy.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Representations Received

None

Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Taunton Deane comprises the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Taunton Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013).

Relevant policies of the development plan are listed below.

CP8 - Environment,

Determining issues and considerations

This application must be determined in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires that the Local Planning Authority must ensure that the listed building, its setting and any features of historic or architectural interest are preserved when deciding whether to approve listed building consent.

The application proposes a minor intervention to the historic fabric to convert the buildings into residential use. The proposed residential use will be less intrusive to the layout of the buildings compared to the previously approved retail use. It will secure the future of these listed buildings to the wider benefit of the Conservation Area.

With regard to the above, it is considered that the changes will allow the building and features of historic or architectural significance to be preserved. It is, therefore, recommended that listed building consent is approved.

In preparing this report the planning officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Contact Officer: Ms A Penn