

Officer Report on Planning Application: 18/01603/LBC

Proposal :	Demolition of existing buildings, conversion of and alterations to listed buildings to form 11 No. dwellings, the erection of 70 No. dwellings (total 81 No. dwellings) and associated works, including access and off-site highway works, parking, landscaping, open space, footpath links and drainage infrastructure
Site Address:	Former BMI Site, Cumnock Road, Ansford
Parish:	Castle Cary
CARY Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr Kevin Messenger Cllr Henry Hobhouse
Recommending Case Officer:	Stephen Baimbridge
Target date :	1st August 2018
Applicant :	Castle Cary (BMI) Ltd
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Mr Matt Frost Motivo Alvington Yeovil, BA20 2FG
Application Type :	Other LBC Alteration

The application was referred to the Ward Members as neighbour and Town Council comments had been received that were contrary to the officer's recommendation. The Ward Members referred to the Vice Area Chair, and the application was referred on to the Area East Committee.

The Area East Committee of 12/06/19 resolved that planning application be deferred for officers to negotiate an amended scheme to address issues concerning:

1. Highway adoption
2. To increase levels of car parking (incl. visitor)
3. To reduce the density of the development
4. To establish the specific boundary treatments with Beechfield House
5. To seek to retain more protected trees currently proposed to be felled
6. Clarity regarding the new highway infrastructure on Cumnock Road

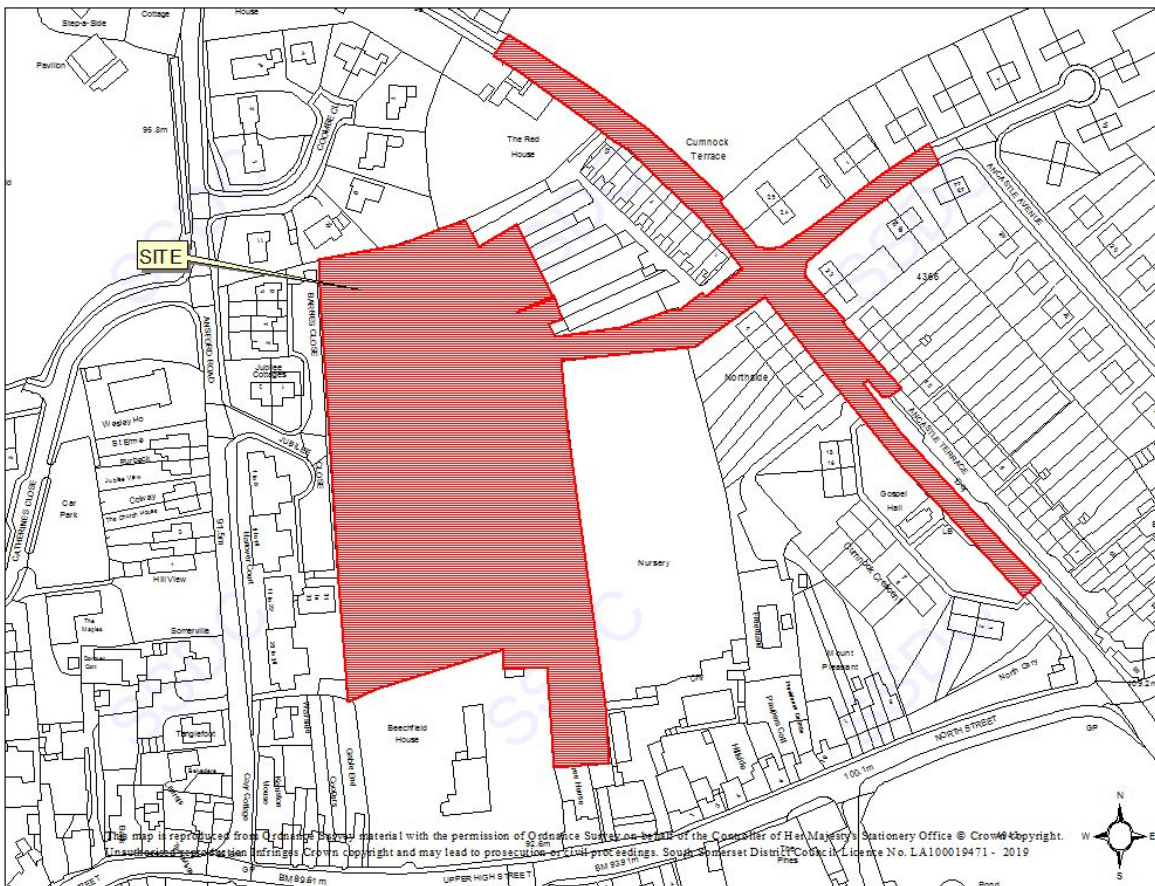
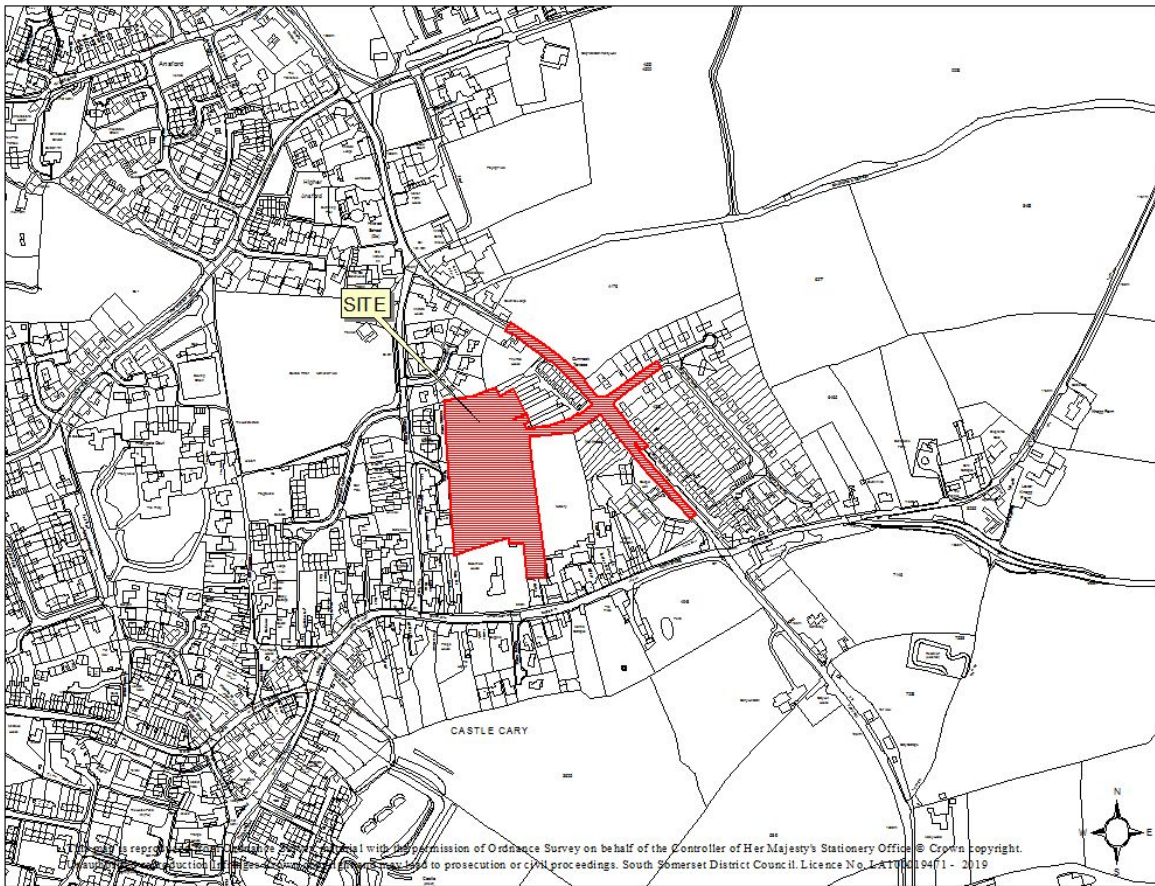
The application returned to the Area East Committee on 10/07/2019.

It was resolved to reject the officer's recommendation to approve the application and instead refer the application to Regulation Committee with a recommendation of refusal for the following reasons:

1. The density of the development is considered too great
2. The lack of on-site parking failing to meet the SCC Parking Strategy
3. The fact the highway as designed within the development cannot be adopted
4. An insufficient number of protected trees are to be retained

If the Regulation Committee is mindful to approve the application then the Committee asks that consideration be given to:

- a) Condition the specific boundary treatments with Beechfield House.
- b) Secure a stone wall in the north eastern corner of the development to prevent pedestrian access to Upper High Street.
- c) Adding an informative note stating the Council will instigate a Tree Preservation Order to protect all new trees planted; to replace those protected trees on the site which will be felled.



SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

The application site is the Former BMI Site in Castle Cary, a redundant employment site comprised of a number of listed and unlisted buildings all of which are in various stages of dilapidation. The site is accessed off Cumnock Road and is surrounded by residential properties on all boundaries but for the eastern boundary which is also shared by the nursery site.

The application seeks listed building consent for the demolition of existing buildings, conversion of and alterations to listed buildings to form 11 No. dwellings, the erection of 70 No. dwellings (total 81 No. dwellings) and associated works, including access and off-site highway works, parking, landscaping, open space, footpath links and drainage infrastructure. The only matters to be considered as part of this application will be the physical works to the listed buildings. All other matters are considered within the full planning application.

RELEVANT HISTORY

Various historic permissions pertaining to the employment site. The decisions of most relevance to this application are:

01/02024/FUL: The carrying out of residential development, including the conversion of existing buildings. Application refused by Committee (14/03/2003). Allowed at appeal (20/05/2004).

01/02025/LBC: The conversion of former mill and two associated buildings to residential use. Application permitted with conditions (09/01/2002).

POLICY

Section 16 of the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act is the starting point for the exercise of listed building control. This places a statutory requirement on local planning authorities to 'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'

Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the NPPF: Chapter 16 - 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' is applicable. It advises that:

"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional."

Whilst Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning Act is not relevant to this listed building application, the following policies should be considered in the context of the application.

The policies of most relevance to the proposal are:

Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028): Policy EQ3- Historic Environments
National Guidance: Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment; and Design

CONSULTATIONS

CASTLE CARY TOWN COUNCIL: We welcome the input from Highways and the tree officer and absolutely support their comments.

Below are the issues that still need to be addressed and until they have been we are unable to support this application

DECISION The Planning Committee voted unanimously against this planning application: Although the Council is very much in favour of brownfield development in the town in principle, it was felt that there are a number of key issues that this new brown field development has failed to address satisfactorily:

- The proposals rely on census information from 2011 which suggests that each dwelling will only require 1.6 car spaces.
- Highways advised in the application that the new roads on the development will be unadoptable, which means residents will have to maintain them in the future. This is unacceptable; other sites in Area East have had problems with similar proposals.
- Despite concerns raised by CCTC in 2018 about the numbers of visitor parking spaces, only 6 visitor parking places are proposed on a site with 81 dwellings, so it is likely that new residents' cars will spill out on to surrounding streets causing congestion.
- No regard has been given to our concerns about the demolition of the Listed former engine house
- Lack of renewable energy solutions including photovoltaics in the new house designs.
- The revised plans, with new three storey houses, compromise the curtilage of nearby Listed buildings, the amenity and privacy of neighbours and views from the Conservation Area of North Street.
- The site owner must rectify any outstanding breaches of law relating to the listed buildings and structures within their curtilage before any new building commences.
- Adequate provision for footpath access between the Red House development and the BMI site needs to be considered, to avoid future residents having to use the busy and dangerous A371 to visit each other.

CONSERVATION OFFICER:

Historic Building Conversion

The historic buildings have been on our Heritage at Risk Register for a long time. Despite lots of effort from Council Officers no meaningful repairs have been carried out, although some work has been carried out to improve the security of the site as unauthorised entry and vandalism has been a recurring problem. There is an historic consent to convert the building into dwellings. The introduction of a new use is welcome, as it will secure the full repair of the building and give it a good future.

We have had some discussion about how the building is best divided up. It is characterised by large open floor areas, where the length of the building can be easily appreciated, giving a sense of past industrial activity that has taken place within the building. The reasons for not dividing in this manner are set out clearly in the submitted heritage statement. In summary the current floor levels are low. Horizontal subdivision will create the need to provide fire and acoustic separation between separate flats, which will reduce the ceiling levels further. Currently the underside of the floor boards and floor joists are revealed to the room below. It should be possible to retain this arrangement if the room above is within the same unit, however this detail will be hidden if divided into flats. I am satisfied that the proposed vertical division is the best solution for the building.

The application includes the replacement of the stair and associated boarding in the Mill. The heritage statement suggests this is original, yet no justification has been submitted for its removal. It should be feasible to retain the stair in Unit 20. If this isn't possible then further justification is needed regarding this. You should also consult Historic England and the amenity societies as the removal of the stair constitutes substantial internal demolition.

There is mention of a cellar under the offices. Information is needed regarding this - will it be associated with one of the flats, perhaps used for storage? Is work required?

The brick setts to the front of the main Mill building should be retained, and should be referenced on the proposed plans.

Plot 26 is badly lit with only two north facing windows. This should be re-considered. It is likely that this unit will be difficult to sell, or subject to high occupancy turn over, which won't be good for the building. The central windows on the east elevation of this building are shown in timber. A steel system should be used for these new openings, to match the adjacent windows. The little garden areas to the front aren't appropriate here. The industrial character of the building would be better retained by removing these and pushing the parking towards the building, or creating an area of 'shared' hardstanding.

Justification has been put forward in the submitted heritage statement relating to the demolition of the engine house. I am satisfied with the case that has been made.

New buildings

The rest of the site generally has quite a cramped appearance. I like the design of units 1-16. The strong linear form relates well to the industrial use of the site and the character of the listed factory building, as does the smaller range adjacent. It is a shame that this aesthetic cannot be adopted across the whole site. As well as giving the whole scheme some integrity the use of terrace forms will make better use of the space. With regard to units 1-16 specifically the south end of the building faces towards the listed building and will be readily viewed. It's fairly disappointing architecturally. This needs to be considered further. In addition the units seem to have one small rooflight over the top bathroom (which seems to straddle the ridge). Given that they are based on the design of a north light building why not introduce a big block of glazing over the central stairwell to flood the core of each unit with natural light?

I am not keen on arrangement resulting from Unit 75. It would be better to remove this one, improving gardens to 74 and 62. The Unit in front could be raised in height to offset this loss - it doesn't look great currently anyway next to a large three storey building.

The arrangement of plots 30 to 33 is awkward. Plot 31 belongs with plots 34 - 39. It will look a bit odd on its own. Plot 30 has a nice wide frontage, which would suit the position of 33 and 32 better. Sitting a unit back in the corner is awkward and wastes some space because of the extent of hardstanding required. In addition the gable end of 31 has the potential to harm the setting of the adjacent listed building. The view south alongside 70-73 should have a decent terminus building at this point. Currently it finishes with a parking area and garage.

The two pairs of hipped roofed dwellings are likely to look fairly odd. I appreciate that one of the retained historic buildings is hipped, but this is unusual for the area, and not something that will make much sense replicated in these two isolated locations.

There are some cases where large buildings are right next to shorter buildings - such as units 40/41 and 42/43. We should have more consistency in such areas.

Unit 28/29 seems over-scaled for its location. It is much bigger than the adjacent retained building and has the potential to be prominent from the environs of Cary Place to the rear.

HISTORIC ENGLAND: Were not originally satisfied with the proposal in relation to the loss of a historic set of stairs but, on the basis of amended plans, they stated the following:

We have now received the revised floor plans for the grade II listed Mill and we are pleased to see the retention of the historic staircase as part of the redevelopment of the site.

REPRESENTATIONS

Six representations submitted; three objections, two general observations, and one letter of support. The representations are available in full on the Council's website so that matters relevant to the listed buildings only will be summarised briefly below:

- Support for the conversion of the hand loom mill and warehouse to residential and the demolition of the engine house. The conversions are essential to preserve this industrial heritage which is so limited. The demolition is necessary given the building's state of repair.
- Recording of the buildings to be demolished is pleasing.
- It would be appropriate to provide an information board on the site's history and original use.
- Opposition to the loss of the powered workshop and engine room. The buildings have been allowed to deteriorate so should not form part of the argument for demolition.
- The 2005 approval retained the buildings and did not include horizontal division of the Mill building.

CONSIDERATIONS

The primary consideration for an application for listed building consent is assessing what impact the proposals will have on the character of the listed buildings.

The proposal involves the conversion of the Grade II listed 'Offices to Ansford Factory', and 'Mill Building to Ansford Factory', which are attached, and also the detached warehouse building to the west, not listed in its own right, to 11 dwellings. It also seeks to demolish the former engine house - which is not listed in its own right and is particularly ruinous.

Significant weight is put on the expert advice of Historic England and the Conservation Officer. Both are satisfied with the proposed conversions and with the demolition of the engine house. Accordingly, it is considered that the harm to the listed buildings is outweighed by the benefits of securing an optimal viable re-use of the 'Offices to Ansford Factory', 'Mill Building to Ansford Factory', and warehouse. The proposal is therefore in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and policy EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028).

RECOMMENDATION

Consent be granted subject to conditions:-

01. The works, by reason of securing an optimal viable re-use for the Grade II listed 'Offices to Ansford Factory', 'Mill Building to Ansford Factory', and warehouse building, and their appropriate scale, design, materials, finishes, and intervention into the listed fabric, are considered to respect the historic and architectural significance of the heritage assets in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and Policy EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028).

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

01. The works hereby granted consent shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: As required by Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

02. The works hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans as listed on the separate planning drawing issue sheet dated 28.03.19.

Reason: In the interests of proper planning and for the avoidance of doubt.

03. No works hereby permitted shall be carried out prior to the submission to and agreement by the Local Planning Authority of a scheme of phasing for the works (full repair, conversion, and, for the engine house, demolition) of the listed buildings. The works shall then be carried out strict accordance with that phasing scheme.

Reason: To ensure that the listed buildings are appropriately repaired and converted as a benefit of this development, in accordance with policy EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and the provisions of the NPPF.

04. Prior to any works being undertaken on the listed buildings, a detailed method statement and specification of all works to the listed buildings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall then be carried out strictly in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To ensure that the listed buildings are appropriately repaired and converted as a benefit of this development, in accordance with policy EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and the provisions of the NPPF.