

TWC/2014/1053

Site of Masonic Building, Constitution Hill, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire
Outline application for the erection of 4no. dwellings with associated access

APPLICANT

Wrekin Masonic Association, Paul Brennan

RECEIVED

24/11/2014

PARISH

Wellington

WARD

College

OFFICER Marie Smyth

OBJECTIONS RECEIVED: Yes.

MAIN ISSUES: Principle of development, character and appearance, impact on amenities of neighbouring properties and parking and highway safety.

THE PROPOSAL:

The application seeks outline consent including details of access for the erection of four dwellings on land at the Masonic Hall, Constitution Hill, Wellington. Matters relating to appearance, layout, landscaping and scale will be dealt with later at the Reserved Matters stage.

The indicative layout and site sections illustrate four, two storey semi-detached dwellings facing south utilising the existing access from Constitution Hill. The access will be widened to form a shared access road, serving both the Hall car park and a parking court with four garages to the rear of the proposed dwellings.

The application is accompanied by a Design, Access and Planning Statement which advises that the proposed development would help fund renovation and an extension to the Masonic Hall, enabling the continued use of the building by the Wrekin Masonic Association.

A provisional enquiry was submitted for the scheme as now proposed as well as a number of other options for the redevelopment of the whole site for residential with up to seven dwellings, some retaining and extending the Hall, and others removing it. The option as now proposed was considered to be preferable as it retained the Masonic Hall whilst allowing some form of residential development without having too much of an impact on neighbouring properties. Officers advised, however, that there should be no development greater than two storeys in height and that the garages to the rear of the site should be kept to a minimum in terms of size and height to avoid having an adverse impact on the neighbouring bungalows on Alverley Close.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

The application site and the adjacent Masonic Hall is owned and maintained by the Wrekin Masonic Association. The site was formerly the Constitution Hill School, comprising an Infant and Junior School. The Junior School was demolished in the 1960s and the former Infant School building converted into the present Masonic Hall. The Hall is a red brick Victorian building, built around 1899.

The Hall has undergone significant maintenance but there is still need for further expenditure for much needed renovation and insulation works to future proof the building, reduce running costs and to provide a more comfortable environment for the users. Developing the part of the site which is surplus to their requirements, the application site, will raise funds to renovate the building and build a dining room extension thereby enabling the continued use of the building by the association.

The application site, to the west of the Hall, is currently redundant land. Access would be maintained though the car park from Constitution Hill. There is a stone boundary wall around the majority of the south, west and north boundaries with a close boarded fence to a section of the west boundary. The site sits higher than King Street to the south west and the bungalows to the south on Constitution Hill, close to the junction with King Street. The site is also slightly higher than Alverley Close to the north. Wellington District Centre, offering a range of facilities and services, is located approximately 400m to the east of the site.

The area is defined by a mix of house types. To the rear, beyond the north boundary is Alverley Close, comprising bungalows and two storey properties. Directly to the rear of the site are two pairs of semi-detached bungalows. To the east is the existing Hall and to the south is a row of bungalows off Constitution Hill. To the west are gardens of properties on Alverley Close, specifically no. 11. Within the wider area there are examples of two storey detached dwellings, two storey semi-detached dwellings and further bungalows. Union Free Church is also located opposite the existing Hall.

PLANNING HISTORY:

W84/0769: Proposed Dining Facilities And Ancillary Accommodation. Outline Granted February 1985

W88/0465: Erection Of Detached Building To Accommodate Dining Hall, Kitchen, Bar And Toilet Facilities. Full Refusal July 1988

W89/0857: Erection of Two Dwellings, With Private Access Through Wrekin Masonic Association Car Park. Outline Granted September 1989

W89/1366: Erection Of Single Storey Extension To Provide Dining Room, Toilet And Kitchen. Outline Granted January 1990

W91/0782: Erection Of One Detached Dwelling And Alterations To Existing Access. Full Granted January 1992

Pre-application enquiries:

PE/2014/0698: Erection of up to seven dwellings and detached garages.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT:

National Planning Guidance:

National Planning Policy Framework

Wrekin Local Plan:
UD2 Design Criteria

Core Strategy:
CS1 Homes
CS5 District and Local Centres in Telford
CS15 Urban Design

CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

Standard consultation responses

Wellington Town Council: No objection

Highways: No objection

Highway Officers have visited the site and have considered the proposed parking arrangements for the development and also the parking provision which would be retained for the Masonic Building as existing. No objections have been raised subject to conditions relating to parking, turning loading and unloading and that the first 5m of the shared access road shall be surfaced in a bound material. In addition an informative has been requested to require the applicant to apply for a licence to undertake works within the highway.

It is worth noting that Highway Officers also consider that there would be sufficient parking provision for the future extension proposal indicatively shown on the submitted plans.

Drainage: Support

Conditions requested requiring a scheme of foul and surface water drainage to be submitted for approval.

Ecology: Comment

Conditions recommended requiring artificial roosting/nesting boxes and a lighting plan, and an informative relating to trenches and pipework.

Shropshire Fire Service: No comment

Neighbour consultation responses

Following consultation 15 letters of objection and one with comments have been received. The responses are summarised below:

- Properties and their gardens would be overlooked, causing loss of privacy.
- Loss of light.
- Bungalows on Alverley Close are lower than the application site.
- Noise and disturbance, impact on enjoyment of home and garden.
- Concern regarding the height of the proposed garages and proximity to wall.
- Noise from garages and car parking, and light pollution from headlights.
- Two storey inappropriate and will not blend in with bungalows in the area, and will dominate the landscape on Constitution Hill.
- Welcome single storey dwellings.
- Loss of parking for the Masonic Hall.

- Increased traffic and parking issues.

A number of representations also raise objections to the potential extension to the Masonic Hall, particularly with concerns regarding additional parking, noise and disturbance. However, this is not for consideration under this application and any future proposal would consider these issues accordingly. Therefore comments relating to this have been omitted.

There have also been comments raised regarding loss of views and the effect on property values in the area. Neither of these are material planning considerations so accordingly will not be taken into account. Reference has also been made in some objections to dwellings previously being refused on the site. The only refusal relates to an extension to the Masonic Hall, and as this application is not considering this, these comments are also not relevant.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:

Principle of development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy states new housing will be located both within and in locations highly accessible to local centres, including Wellington. The location of the application site is within approximately 400m of the Primary retail zone of Wellington. The railway station and bus stops are also within walking distance. It is therefore considered that the site is in a sustainable location and future occupiers will be able to easily access shops and facilities. Supporting the application in principle would therefore be in accordance with the NPPF and Policy CS5.

Character and appearance

An indicative layout plan has been submitted which demonstrates two pairs of semi-detached, two storey dwellings with private gardens to the rear and a shared driveway accessing garages and parking to the rear of the site. Officers are satisfied with the proposal and consider that the land can adequately accommodate four dwellings, with the appropriate levels of parking and private amenity space, which would not be unacceptable within the context of the varied character of the surrounding area. The application also includes an indicative street scene as well as site sections to demonstrate the general scale of the proposals relative to the existing context. This considers the height of the site above the bungalows on Constitution Hill and also with properties on Alverley Close to the rear. Officers are satisfied that two storey dwellings would be appropriate on the site, and would not appear unduly dominant.

Notwithstanding this indicative layout and elevations, it is therefore considered that appropriately designed dwellings at the scale suggested could relate positively to the context. The street scene indicates properties which would make reference to the features of the Masonic Hall, and while this is considered to be an appropriate approach, the design will be considered fully at the reserved matters stage against the requirements of policies UD2 and CS15.

Impact on amenities of neighbouring properties

The indicative layout and elevations also demonstrate that four dwellings could be accommodated without having an unduly harmful effect on the amenities of neighbouring properties. The closest relationship to bungalows on Constitution Hill would be 12m. The site is elevated above these properties, however, officers are satisfied that the separation and the position of the dwellings would ensure that the proposal would not appear unduly overbearing or result in an unacceptable level of loss of light. The site sections illustrate that there will be no overlooking, despite the difference in land levels, due to the position of the dwellings and the existing boundary wall. Officers are also satisfied that that dwellings would not cause an unacceptable level of harm to the occupants of properties of Alverley Close to the rear of the site, which would be located over 25m away.

Overlooking, loss of privacy and loss of light have been cited as grounds for objection, particularly considering that the neighbouring properties are bungalows and lower than the application site. However, the information submitted is sufficient to satisfy officers that these concerns will not be an issue. A condition will require site sections and street views to accurately demonstrate the different land levels and the proposed dwellings in relation to neighbouring properties.

Neighbours have also cited objections relating to height and proximity of the proposed garages to the adjacent boundary wall. The garages would be located to the north east corner of the site, adjacent to the garden of no. 9 Alverley Close, and also to the north west of the site. The garages to the north west would be positioned adjacent to the gardens of 10 and 11 Alverley Close to the north, with the garden of no. 11 also extending along the side, west boundary of the site. The site sections, although indicative, demonstrate that the eaves of the garages will be at the same height as the top of the boundary wall. The shallow pitched roofs will then slope away from the boundary. The reserved matters application will control the detail of this but officers are satisfied that garages in this location, at this height would not be unacceptably harmful to neighbouring properties. The site sections and street views required by condition will assist this consideration and enable the relationship to be controlled. It is also considered that there will be sufficient separation to allow the wall to be maintained, which is proposed to be undertaken by a management company.

It is also worth noting that a stability report was requested to be undertaken in light of the land level differences and the retaining boundary wall. The stability report declaration form has accordingly been completed and submitted.

Finally in respect of residential amenity, objections have been raised relating to the general noise and disturbance associated with the dwellings as well as from the use of the garages and car parking, including light pollution from headlights. It is not considered that the level of noise and disturbance generated by four dwellings and the associated vehicle movements would be unacceptable. Furthermore this impact will be reduced by the existing boundary wall, which will also serve to limit the direct effect of car headlights.

Parking and highway safety

The existing access from Constitution Hill will be widened to form a shared access road, serving the proposed dwellings and the retained car park for the Masonic Hall. Within the proposed site the access will continue in between the dwellings to a shared courtyard at the rear with garaging, parking, turning space and pedestrian access to the rear gardens. Objections have been raised to the loss of parking for the Masonic Hall and this, combined with the traffic generated by the proposed dwellings, would result in parking issues.

Highway Officers have met with the agent on site to address some initial concerns regarding the dropped kerb and visibility splays. The agent was also required to provide details of the floor area of the Masonic Hall to ensure that the remaining parking area would be sufficient to serve the building. Following the receipt of this information Highway Officers confirmed that sufficient parking provision will be retained for the Masonic Building as existing, and for the future extension proposal indicatively shown on the submitted plans.

Highway Officers also consider the amended visibility splay and dropped kerb details to be acceptable and accordingly now have no objections subject to conditions. These relate to further details regarding the area for parking/ turning/ loading and unloading and also that the shared access road within the site shall be surfaced in a bound material for a minimum distance of 5m from the rear of the highway boundary. An informative has also been requested to ensure the applicant obtains a highways licence.

It is therefore considered that the parking available for both the future residents and the users of the Hall is sufficient, and should not therefore impact unacceptably on the surrounding area.

Ecology

No objections have been raised by the Ecologist subject to conditions requiring a lighting strategy and nesting/roosting boxes, and an informative relating to trenches and pipework, which will accordingly be applied.

Drainage

Drainage officers have also raised no objections subject to conditions requiring details of foul and surface water drainage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the development would be in a sustainable location and is highly accessible to the district centre of Wellington. The dwellings would respect the context of the site and would not be harmful to the character and appearance on the street scene. Furthermore, the proposed dwellings would not have an adverse impact on the residential amenities of nearby dwellings. The development would therefore be in accordance with both local policy and national policy guidance.

RECOMMENDATION: to GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

1. A01 Time limit outline
2. A03 Time limit- Submission of Reserved Matters
3. B002 Standard Outline- some matters reserved
4. B003 General details required
5. B037 Access drive bound material
6. B042 Parking/turning/loading/unloading
7. B061 Foul and surface water
8. B145 Lighting strategy
9. B149 Erection of artificial nesting/roosting boxes
10. C040 No approval of layout

Informatives

- I08 HIGHWAYS - Highways Licence
- I17b COAL AUTHORITY STANDING ADVICE
- I25e Trenches and pipework