

TWC/2015/0265

Land adjacent and rear of The Crown Inn, 10 Hodge Bower, Ironbridge, Telford, Shropshire

Erection of 5no. dwellings ***AMENDED DESCRIPTION & AMENDED PLANS RECEIVED***

APPLICANT

Millennium Properties Limited, Steve Kella

RECEIVED

01/04/2015

PARISH

The Gorge

WARD

Ironbridge Gorge

OFFICER Matthew Thomas

CLLR NICOLA LOWERY HAS REQUESTED THIS APPLICATION BE DETERMINED BY MEMBERS OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

OBJECTIONS RECEIVED: Yes

MAIN ISSUES:

Principle of residential development within a World Heritage Site/Conservation Area, Green Network, Impact on the character of the area/historic fabric, Highway and Drainage considerations and impact on the amenities of existing neighbouring properties.

PROPOSAL

This full planning application seeks permission for the erection of 5no. dwellings on land to the rear of The Crown Inn, Hodge Bower in Ironbridge. Originally, the proposal was for 6no. dwellings however at the request of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed roadside unit was removed from the scheme.

This application follows recent approvals for the conversion of the existing Public House to 2no. residential dwellings and 5no. self-contained apartments together with the erection of a rear extension. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent were granted for the conversion in November 2014.

The proposed development incorporates the erection of a pair of semi-detached dwellings and a detached property to the rear of the site, set back approximately 40m from Hodge Bower. Each dwelling is to be of two storey construction providing three bedrooms. The applicant has engaged in pre-application discussions with officers, including the Conservation Officer, and the design of the dwellings has materialised from these discussions. The proposed dwellings will be traditional in character, having shallow roof pitches and chimneys, timber windows with characteristic features including window heads and cills and detailing above the doorframe.

The existing access off Hodge Bower will be utilised and on-site parking will be provided to the front together with provisions for bin storage. Final materials will be agreed at a later stage through appropriate conditions. General landscaping of the site is also included as part of the proposals.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The Crown Inn is a Grade II Listed Public House situated off Hodge Bower in Ironbridge within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and Severn Gorge Conservation Area. The building is formed of a central 3 storey element with sash windows and pediment door with a two storey wing to the east and a series of outbuilding to the west, latterly used as a function room. Finishing materials consists predominantly of red brick, plain clay roof tiles and timber windows and doors.

The building fronts the highway where there is a small car park to the front and a significantly larger one to the rear. A small garden area is located opposite the site. Boundary treatments are a mixture of low level brick walls, timber panel fencing and trees. Neighbouring properties are of a design typical to the area however they are a mix of age.

The application site lies within a reasonably sustainable area on the outskirts of Ironbridge where there are a number of facilities including access to public transport. Madeley is located approximately 2.5 miles north east and Telford town centre approximately 6.5 miles to the north.

The application site lies within instability zone 3 as identified within High Point Rendel report which states that the area is suitable for development in accordance with the local development plan subject to appropriate ground investigation works.

SUMMARISED CONSULTATIONS

Standard consultation responses

The Gorge Parish Council: Object

- Proposal is overdevelopment of the site – north side of this end of Hodge Bower is characterised by terraces of cottages, some set back with gardens to the front. A terrace of 4 or 5 houses is as much as this site can accommodate
- Car parking places for the properties should be more sympathetically arranged so as to soften the appearance of the development
- The property at the front of the site next to No.7 Hodge Bower should not be allowed and instead should be planted to provide softening of the site. This dwelling would adversely affect the amenities of this neighbouring property
- Telford & Wrekin Council's Geotechnical Department should be consulted on this application following the ground stability monitoring surveys undertaken
- Additional detail is required for the design and finish of the properties including elevations, door and window design, type of tile and brick finish
- Previous concerns relating to sewerage network in the area and its ability to cope with any additional housing

Following receipt of amended plans and re-consultation, the Parish Council have now lifted their objection.

Cllr Nicola Lowery: Object

- Objects over density of the development, extreme traffic congestion, access for emergency services and land stability.

- Planning obligation to protect the Conservation Area/World Heritage Site from inappropriate development and to consider the needs of conservation and the local community. Proposed development undermines this heritage asset.

Highways: Comment

- In principle no objections to some development but concerns are raised regarding the amount of development. The junction of Hodge Bower and Lincoln Hill has bad visibility and the junction with Madeley Road is worse. Any increase in traffic using either junction should be discouraged. Following conditions required:
 - Parking, Loading, Unloading & Turning
 - Visibility Splays – 2.4m x 25m

Drainage: Comment

- The application form has stated that soakaways will be utilised for the disposal of surface water. Due to the known instability issues in the Ironbridge Gorge, this will not be acceptable and a positively drained system which will provide 30% betterment on the existing rate of flow will be required
- Scheme for foul & surface water drainage required

Built Heritage Conservation: Support subject to conditions:

This application has been revised to remove the front unit which is considered to be harmful to the overall setting of the Listed Building as well as other planning concerns. The units to the back have been redesigned to reflect a more traditional character to the principle elevation. Broadly therefore the scheme is considered to be acceptable in principle. There are still matters to be resolved in relation to the finer detailing but this could be covered under a condition if so minded. The following conditions are therefore required:

- Windows to be timber, colour & finish to be agreed in writing with the LPA
- Full sections for timber windows and doors at 1:10, windows to show reveal of minimum 50mm
- Sample panel of bricks and tile 1m sq to show brick type, bond and mortar joints. Bond to match that existing on the principle frontage of the Crown Inn
- Details of eaves at 1:20
- Landscaping condition (including soft planting & surfacing materials) with details to be submitted and agreed
- Details of all external services

Ecology: Comment – following conditions/informatives required;

- Erection of artificial nesting/roosting boxes
- External Lighting Plan
- Bats & trees, nesting wild birds, storage of materials, trenches & pipework

Shropshire Archaeology: No Comment

The Coal Authority: No Objection

The Coal Authority is satisfied with the broad conclusions of the Ground Investigation Report, informed by the site investigation works; that coal mining legacy issues are not significant within the application site and do not pose a risk to the proposed

development. Accordingly, the Coal Authority does not object to the proposed development and no specific mitigation measures are required as part of this development proposal to address coal mining legacy issues.

Shropshire Fire Service: Comment – include Fire Authority informative
Neighbour consultation responses

Following neighbour consultation, 32 letters of objection were received and the issues raised have been summarised below:

- Development will increase the amount of traffic on Hodge Bower which will in turn have a detrimental impact on highway safety
- Visibility, access, narrowness, lack of on-site parking for existing residents, lack of pedestrian footpaths and restricted access for emergency vehicles makes Hodge Bower dangerous to drive and there are concerns that the development will increase risk of accidents
- Ironbridge is a World Heritage Site & Conservation Area – proposed development does not reflect this status and does not preserve or enhance
- Proposal is overdevelopment of the site
- Development will lead to significant noise, disturbance and potential smells and fumes – inconvenience for existing residents
- Adverse impact on amenity of existing residents from loss of privacy and light
- Concerns over land stability and whether site is suitable for development – history of land slippages/instability cracks are evident within the area
- Sewage system/drainage infrastructure is already under strain and cannot accommodate additional dwellings
- Design/density is inappropriate for WHS/CA and more suited to urban areas
- Concerns over delivery vehicles/trucks coming and going and impact this will have on highways etc
- More recent developments in the area have proven difficult to sell – is there a need for new housing? Empty dwellings will have a detrimental impact on the area and may increase crime
- No.7 Hodge Bower was built around 1770 as an artisan's workshop and living quarters. Along with several other pre-1800 buildings it helped define the character of the local area – proposal shows a complete misunderstanding of the local area and will adversely affect local heritage assets
- Site is adjacent a registered Nature Reserve which will be adversely affected by the proposed development as well as other local wildlife
- Restrictive covenants on the former garden fronting The Crown Inn for it to be re-instated as a walled garden however this has never been done
- Insufficient information within the application to adequately assess the proposal both on the impact on the WHS and the Grade II Listed Building
- The Crown Inn is redundant but this proposed development is a poor solution
- Proposed development is to maximise profit with no consideration for the area
- Proposal represents an undistinguished form of development
- Proposed finishing materials are unsuitable for a WHS/Conservation Area
- Supporting information is generic and underlines the ill-considered approach of the development proposed

- Developers have not engaged with local people and this demonstrates they don't understand how residents live and work together

3 letters of support (subject to conditions) were also received

Following re-consultation, 13 letters of objection were received. Many residents feel the amendments proposed are insufficient and do not go far enough to address all of the issues raised. No new issues were raised.

RELEVANT HISTORY

TWC/2014/0055 – Change of use of public house (use class A4) to 2no. residential dwellings and 5no. self-contained apartments (use class C3) and the erection of a rear extension. Full Granted (12/11/2014)

TWC/2014/0056 – Change of use of public house (use class A4) to 2no. residential dwellings and 5no. self-contained apartments (use class C3) and the erection of a rear extension. Listed Building Consent Granted (12/11/2014)

RELEVANT POLICIES

Core Strategy:

CS1 Homes

CS9 Accessibility & Social Inclusion

CS12 Natural Environment

CS14 Cultural, Historic & Built Environment

CS15 Urban Design

Wrekin Local Plan:

EH14 Land Stability

UD2 Design Criteria

H6 Windfall Sites in Telford & Newport

HE3 New Development in Conservation Areas

SG1 World Heritage Site

OL3 Green Network

OL4 Development in the Green Network

National Planning Guidance:

National Planning Policy Framework

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Proposal & Background Information

The Crown Inn is located off Hodge Bower in Ironbridge, within the Severn Gorge Conservation Area and World Heritage Site. The site subject to this application is located to the rear of the Crown Inn and was previously used as a car park to the public house. In November 2014 planning permission, together with associated listed building consent, was granted for the conversion of the existing public house into two residential dwellings and five apartments. Detail was provided at the time explaining that prior to the present owners purchasing the site, the Crown Inn was owned by Admiral Taverns who sold the public house as part of their disposal of over 400 pubs. Because of a downward slide in trade the property was marketed over a

period of 20 months however the site gathered little interest during this time. The pub has since operated on a caretaker operation to ensure occupation of the property however the Local Planning Authority are of the understanding that the public house has been vacant now for several months.

This current application seeks permission for the erection of five dwellings comprising a pair of semi-detached properties and a detached dwelling, all of two storey construction providing three bedrooms. The primary considerations for this application include;

- the principle of residential development on this site
- stability of the site and it's suitability for development
- the impact the development will have on the heritage of the area as a Conservation Area and World Heritage Site
- impact on the amenity of existing neighbouring properties
- impact the development will have on the local highway network

Principle of Residential Development

Policies OL3 (Green Network) and OL4 (Development in the Green Network) of the Wrekin Local Plan relate to the intrinsic value of the Borough's Green Network as well as providing guidance to development within this designation. Policy OL3 sets out the 6 principle aims of the Green Network which include maintaining Telford's image as an attractive place to live and work, the separation of the built up areas with green wedges, to provide informal recreation and open space and to protect the Borough's ecological and archaeological heritage. The NPPF however asserts the local green space designation should only be used where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.

It is argued that the purpose of the Green Network is not reflected within this application site when considering its existing use as a car park for the Public House. The site is generally featureless with no vegetation other than the established tree planting along the rear boundary. The site displays low landscape sensitivity with the majority of the site laid with hardstanding and devoid of features or significant planting. The site is of low ecological value and the development is unlikely to harm protected species and there may be opportunity to enhance the ecological resource in this location through, for instance, appropriate new planting and the installation of bird and bat boxes. Taking the above in to consideration, the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the principle of residential development on this land is acceptable as the Borough's Green Network designation will be unaffected and therefore the proposed scheme will comply with policies OL3-6 of the Wrekin Local Plan and policy CS11 of the Core Strategy.

Policy H6 (Windfall Sites in Telford & Newport) states that housing development will be permitted on land under 0.4 hectare that is within the built up area of Telford and Newport when the following criteria are met:

- a) the site can be adequately accessed and parking provided
- b) the site can be adequately drained
- c) the Council is satisfied that, where there are problems of land stability and contamination the developer has taken adequate remedial action

- d) the proposal does not have an adverse impact on the local environment, especially in its relationship with adjacent land uses, and
- e) the proposal shows a high quality of design especially in Conservation Areas

Given the status of the site as a Conservation Area and World Heritage Site, significant weight should be given to the design of the scheme to ensure there is no adverse impact on the Borough's heritage assets. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that 'housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development' with an emphasis on developing brownfield sites first. As Ironbridge is a destination for local tourism, there are strong public transport connections, making this a sustainable site suitable for residential development, subject to the usual criteria.

Site Stability

Policy EH14 (Land Stability) advises that development will be permitted within the Mineral and Mining consideration areas where it is demonstrated that the proposed development can tolerate the ground conditions and structural integrity is not compromised. The Coal Authority has been consulted on this application and they confirm that the site falls within the defined Development High Risk Area; therefore within the application site and surrounding area there are coal mining features and hazards which need to be considered in relation to the determination of this planning application. The Coal Authority records indicate that the site is in an area of likely historic unrecorded underground coal mine workings at a shallow depth. Reference is made to the Ground Investigation Report (prepared by GIP Ltd) submitted as part of this planning application and how this report has been informed by an appropriate range of sources of information including historic maps, geological maps, a Coal Mining Report and intrusive site investigations. This report sets out details of the site investigation works which have been carried out on site and their findings including 6 boreholes that have been drilled on site to depths of 15m and 30m in order to investigate ground conditions, including presence and state of any historical mine workings. The report notes that in three of the deeper boreholes a single coal seam was recorded but that this was intact and no evidence of workings or voids was encountered in any of the boreholes drilled. On the basis of the findings of the boreholes drilled on site the report concludes that there would appear to be sufficient cover of rock like strata above the coal seams to ensure the safety of future surface structures from past coal mining activity. The report states that remedial measures such as proof drilling and grouting of the coal seams will not therefore be required. The Coal Authority concludes that they are satisfied with the broad conclusions of the Ground Investigations Report; that coal mining legacy issues are not significant within the application site and do not pose a risk to the proposed development.

With regards to ground instability within the area, the majority of the application site lies within instability zone 3 as identified within the High Point Rendel report, which states that the area is likely to be suitable for development in accordance with the local development plan provided the developer undertakes appropriate mitigation and stabilisation measures. The Ground Report identifies the site was monitored for ground movement between 2013-2014, which concludes that the site is not at significant risk of large scale slope related movement and special precautionary measures will not be required. A Slope stability declaration form accompanies the application confirming the findings and as such it is considered that the site can be

adequately development without detriment to the stability of the land on the site or its immediate neighbours.

Design & Heritage Considerations

Within Conservation Areas new development will be expected to be of the highest standards of design and will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area; as stated within policy HE3 (New Development in Conservation Areas) of the Wrekin Local Plan. To this extent, proposals should be considered in relation to their design, scale, massing, proportions, roofscape, finishing materials and boundary treatments. The policy also asserts that development will not adversely affect the established views within the area, the skyline or longer views of the area and will not adversely affect the spatial quality of the area.

Policy SG1 (World Heritage Site) is in place to protect the international value of the Severn Gorge area as a World Heritage Site and policy CS14 (Cultural, Historic & Built Environment) of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy focuses on protecting and enhancing the historic environment, cultural and built heritage within the borough to maintain and improve quality of life. Paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises Local Planning Authorities to look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Policy UD2 (Design Criteria) provides guidance to assess whether or not proposals are of an appropriate design quality and relate positively their context. It advises the Council to assess proposed development it in relation to its scale, massing, form, density, orientation and layout, proportions, materials, landscape elements, access, parking and spatial quality. In addition the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework asserts that development should be of high quality design, respond to local context and should reinforce local distinctiveness.

The proposal is for the erection of a pair of semi-detached dwellings and a detached property to the rear of the site, set back approximately 40m from Hodge Bower. The existing access will be utilised and on-site parking will be provided to the front of the proposed dwellings. A general landscaping scheme has been submitted which includes green areas to the front of the houses including the proposal to retain a number of the existing trees. Greater detail will be required with regards to the landscaping of the site, finishing materials, bin storage etc. however this can be reserved for later approval through conditions.

For a period of several months, the applicant has worked closely with the Local Planning Authority; consulting with both Planning and Conservation Officers to achieve a scheme that recognises the importance of this sensitive location as a Conservation Area and World Heritage Site. Originally, the proposal was for 6no. dwellings however at the request of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed roadside unit was removed from the scheme. Officers requested this unit be removed as they considered that residential development along this traditional frontage would compromise its character and would therefore detrimentally affect the Conservation Area. In addition, having a new property in this location would also be

to the detriment of the amenity of the adjoining neighbouring property, No.7 Hodge Bower, by virtue of loss of light, privacy and an unacceptable overbearing impact.

The design of the proposed dwellings has evolved from analysing the character and appearance of the traditional cottages along Hodge Bower. This has informed the design of the proposed pair of semi-detached dwellings and the detached property; including shallow roof pitches, inclusion of chimneys, timber windows and doors and well-proportioned windows with traditional detailing around the openings. The layout of the dwellings has also been amended to have some set-backs to break up the overall development. The general design is considered to be appropriate and conditions can be included to the decision notice requiring the applicant submits additional finer details including samples of the finishing materials which will be expected to be of the highest quality in order to reinforce the strong local vernacular. Other detailing will include details of the eaves, details of all external services, sections for all windows and doors and a full landscaping plan.

The application site is surrounded by existing residential development; in particular to the south-east and south-west by neighbouring properties on Hodge Bower. However, it is proposed to build to the rear of the site, approximately 40m from Hodge Bower road and the separation distance between the proposed new build and the closest neighbouring property (No.7 Hodge Bower) is in excess of 20m. It is for this reason that the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that neighbouring properties will not be adversely affected by any significant loss of light, privacy or any overbearing impact. The Conservation Officer has been consulted as part of this application and supports the proposal development in principle subject to a number of conditions relating to the submission of finer detailing.

Access & Highways

Access in to and out of the proposed development will be via the existing access which currently serves the car park for the Crown Inn. The Local Planning Authority and Local Highways Authority appreciate that the junctions of Hodge Bower and Lincoln Hill and Belmont Road and Madeley Road have poor visibility. Local residents have raised their own concerns regarding the narrowness of Hodge Bower and the issues they already experience, in particular at peak times as well as the general lack of parking within the area. The Local Planning Authority acknowledges that the local road network in and around Hodge Bower is restrictive however this is a large car park which previously served a Public House. Had this business still be running and running successfully, this car park would have allowed a significant number of vehicles to visit the site and therefore officers consider that the overall increase in vehicular movements will not be significantly detrimental. The Local Highways Authority, whilst appreciating the existing problems faced by local residents, has raised no objection to the principle of residential development on this site and is supporting the proposals subject to the inclusion of conditions to ensure adequate on-site parking and turning as well as the creation of suitable visibility splays.

Drainage

The application forms submitted state that soakaways will be utilised for the disposal of surface water. Due to the known instability issues in the Ironbridge Gorge the Council's Drainage Engineer has stated that this will not be possible and a positively

drained system which will provide 30% betterment on the existing rate of flow will be required. No objections have been raised by the Drainage Engineer subject to conditions to include details of how the above shall be achieved together with a scheme for foul and surface water to ensure satisfactory drainage of the site and to avoid flooding. Accordingly it is considered that the site can be appropriately developed without the risk of flooding to the surrounding area.

Ecology/Arboriculture

A Tree Survey was submitted in support of this application and this report correctly identifies a number of trees which are present surrounding the car park and varies in species. The application proposal will impact upon 3 existing trees to the rear of the development and this will require the removal of a Hawthorn tree, a multi-stemmed Sycamore and an Ashe tree due to changes in levels and nature of surfacing required. The trees in question are stated as being 'low-grade' trees and any resultant loss of amenity will be offset by replacement tree planting of higher quality. For the other trees, the report outlines the tree protection measures proposed which include prohibiting any excavation, the use of mechanical plant, the storage of materials, plant or equipment or the movement of plant or vehicles beneath the canopy of these trees. The report outlines the potential locations for replacement tree planting as well as suggesting potential species however it is considered that this can be addressed at a later stage through conditions.

A Bat Survey was also submitted in support of this application and indicates that the mature trees on the northern boundary of the site have some potential to provide bat roosting sites. The Council's Ecologist has assessed this report and is satisfied with its findings and recommendations which include the erection of bat and bird boxes and the submission of an external lighting plan to minimise disturbance to bats which are a European Protected Species. Taking the above in to consideration, officers are satisfied that the application complies with policy CS12 (Natural Environment) of the Core Strategy which seeks to protect and enhance Borough's biodiversity.

Response to Consultations

The majority of the issues raised within neighbour consultation responses relate to the impact the development will have on highways and on the Conservation Area/World Heritage Site. To this end, the Local Planning Authority responds that the applicant has engaged in detailed discussions with both Planning Officers and Conservation Officers both at pre-application stages and during the process of this application. Many amendments have been made to the scheme including reducing the number of dwellings from six to five and alterations to the design and layout of the properties. These amendments were all made at the request of the Local Planning Authority to ensure the resultant scheme provides development which is in-keeping with the area and to ensure the Conservation Area/World Heritage Site is not compromised in any way. Officers would therefore have to disagree with some of the objections received which state otherwise. With regards to the impact the development will have on the local highway network, the Local Highways Authority has assessed the proposal and acknowledges that there are existing highway problems. Following their assessment however the LHA are not of the opinion that the proposed development will adversely affect the local highway network in such a way which would justify this application being refused and thus are supporting the proposals subject to conditions. Amongst other issues, land stability, ecology and

drainage of the site were other matters raised by neighbours. These issues have already been addressed within this report and appropriate conditions will be imposed where necessary. Finally; matters relating to covenants on land, property prices and the likeliness of the proposed new dwellings selling are not material planning considerations.

Conclusions & Recommendation

To summarise; the principle of residential development on this site is supported by local policy as well as within the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. Whilst the application site is located within the Borough's Green Network, given its current use as a car park it is clear that the purpose of the Green Network is not reflected within this site and therefore its loss will not be detrimental. The application site is situated within a sustainable location with strong links to public transport and development on this site will see a currently redundant site brought back in to active use. The Ground Investigation Report accompanying this application has demonstrated that the proposed development can tolerate the ground conditions and its structural integrity will not be compromised. Similarly, subject to conditions, the site can be adequately accessed and drained and there will be no adverse impact on local biodiversity. Moreover, the applicant has worked together with the Local Planning Authority to achieve a suitable design which will assist in protecting and enhancing the Severn Gorge Conservation Area as a World Heritage Site. Accordingly, the scheme complies with local policy and the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. A04 Time Limit
2. B016 Details of Materials
3. B018 Sample Brick Panel
4. B021 Details of Windows & Doors (Timber/Colour & finish/Reveals)
5. B041 Visibility Splays (2.4m x 25m)
6. B042 Parking, Turning, Loading & Unloading
7. B061 Foul & Surface Water Drainage
8. B079 Soakaways – 30% betterment
9. B092 Details of all external services
10. B094 Details of eaves
11. B121 Landscaping Design
12. B129 No approval of boundary treatments (to be agreed)
13. B130 Tree Protective Fencing
14. B150 Site Environmental Management Plan
15. C38 Development in accordance with plans
16. C074 Tree Protection
17. C100 Artificial nesting/roosting boxes
18. C106 External Lighting Plan
19. D01 Removal of Permitted Development Rights

Informatives

Wildlife informatives - Bats & trees, nesting wild birds, storage of materials, trenches

Highways

Fire Authority

Broadband

Instability Zone 3