

PLANNING

To All Members of the Main Planning Committee

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Our ref: PMcK/CWB
Your ref:

27 April 2012

Dear Councillor

12/0086/FUL – PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (ERECTION OF 11 DWELLINGS) AND A RETAIL UNIT (WITH 2 BEDROOM FLAT ABOVE) FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF NOS 169 AND 171 HIGH STREET.

169-173 HIGH STREET, EAST CHESTERTON, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 1NL

I am writing to you in advance of the forthcoming Planning Committee Meeting on Wednesday 2nd May 2012, when the above-mentioned planning application is to be considered with a recommendation of approval. I am the applicants' agent, and on behalf of Mr Neil Cook and Mr Dan Brown, who are the co-applicants, I would wish to emphasise how pleased they are with the Officer recommendation to the Committee.

I hope you are able to take a moment or two to read through this letter as it explains some of the rationale behind the application and also addresses a few issues that were raised at the Development Control Forum meeting that was held on the 14th March.

The application to be presented to you has been the subject of extensive public consultation, both before and since the planning application was submitted, and we feel this has resulted in a well considered design solution for the site. Prior to the application being submitted a public exhibition was held, and this was extremely well attended. The planned redevelopment of the site for residential purposes was generally well received. A number of detailed questions and comments were raised at the exhibition, many of these relating to design and traffic, and these comments were all fully considered ahead of the application being submitted with key amendments being made to the scheme.

In addition to the public exhibition, the applicants have also had a number of individual one to one meetings with immediate neighbours, both before and since submission of the application, and have sought at all times to reach consensus on individual elements of the scheme, wherever this has been possible.

During the DCF a number of questions were raised by the Committee Members regarding the layout and in particular the positioning of some of the dwellings. Since the DCF additional and amended drawings have been submitted. Concerns regarding the gable to gable relationship between Plot 8 and the existing dwelling at No.125 were raised with one Councillor

querying whether this relationship was uncomfortably close. This distance is in fact approximately 5.2 metres, and since the DCF we have looked at other precedents in the area where gable to gable distances, between adjoining properties, are either equivalent to that distance, or in a number of instances somewhat less. In our estimation, the gable to gable distances in this scheme are entirely acceptable, and characteristic of what one would expect in an urban area. The comparative study that was submitted to the Council showing the gable to gable distances has been attached for reference. The existing vegetation along the boundary with No.125 makes the adjacent garden extremely dim and dark, and dominates it. A new boundary solution has been proposed here and the existing corrugated metal and concrete wall is to be removed and replaced with a traditional brickwork wall with trellis and climbers. This new boundary treatment has been agreed in principle with the owner of this property and as a result a more congruous landscaping scheme has been proposed. Plot 8 only extends to 2 storeys, compared to other plots in the scheme which are 3 storeys, and has a flat roof which will reduce overshadowing further. The Planning Committee report also supports this and the officer correctly states he does ***"not consider any harmful visual impact to result upon number 125, which will benefit from a general improved outlook, because of the removal of the conifers"***.

Since the DCF we have also addressed concerns raised by another Councillor regarding the relationship between Plots 7 and 8 and the flank, gable wall of Plot 9. Clarification and a clearer understanding of the living conditions that would be experienced by the occupiers of Plots 7 and 8 in terms of their outlook was sought. In response to this and as explained at the DCF the rear part of the site has been designed as a Mews or Courtyard- type development. It did not appear to us that the relationship between the front elevation of Plot 7 and the gable of Plot 9 was particularly uncharacteristic of what one would see in this sort of scenario. To further emphasise this point we have since produced a drawing which highlights how this relationship works elsewhere in the city (please find a copy attached). The locations referred to in the drawing are Willow Walk, a well-known Mews Street in Cambridge, situated to the rear of New Square and a typical terraced street, in this case at Sturton Street. This drawing clearly demonstrates that within tight urban environments, these relationships are not at all uncommon, and we would also emphasise that Plot 7 does, in any event, retain oblique views past Plot 9. In summary, the separation distances between each of the 6 dwelling blocks is in our estimation entirely acceptable and a sustainable form of development for the site has been proposed. It cannot be viewed as overdevelopment and the Planning officer within the Committee Report correctly states that he does not consider ***"that the relative density of this arrangement to be unacceptable in this location, directly behind the High Street"***.

Since the DCF amended drawings have been submitted to the Council and these have resulted in the first floor bedroom windows of Plots 6-8 being relocated onto the rear elevations (previously they were on flank walls). Importantly, the Planning officer is happy with this arrangement. These windows do face onto the rearmost part of the adjoining gardens on the High Street; however, the plans also incorporate a clever window design which further reduces any impact of overlooking. "Privacy Hoods" have been fitted to the rear windows which adjoin neighbouring properties, and these will restrict views back towards the most private parts of adjacent houses (see attached sketch, which is the simplest way of demonstrating this arrangement). The use of these "hoods" has also meant that no windows on the side elevations of Plots 6 and 7 face each other, as they did previously. The above combination of factors will in the applicant's opinion ensure that the development will not adversely affect the amenity of any of the adjoining residents.

We are aware that a number of objections have been received regarding the loss of the restaurant presently on site, although as Members will doubtless be aware, this use ceased in December 2011, with the owners having surrendered their lease, having concluded that their business was no longer viable. We note that these objections have mainly referred to the use

of this building as a pub, however, it is important to clarify that this particular building has not traded as a pub for many years (in excess of 10 years), and this has been acknowledged by Planning Officers. It is acknowledged that there was a small bar area within the restaurant (and some people did use this on an occasional basis), however the primary and lawful planning use of the building was as a restaurant. Plainly, and as stated within the Committee Report, there is no protection for the loss of these facilities within the Cambridge Local Plan.

Some concern has also been expressed by local residents that this development will change their outlook, and the character of the area, and will therefore reduce residential amenity. It is important to note that this is a windfall site within an urban area and development of this form should therefore be generally encouraged. We believe that this scheme represents a high quality design that responds positively to its context and will undoubtedly improve the quality and character of the area. Importantly the new dwellings will not appear overbearing in the locality and will respect the privacy of surrounding neighbours. In scale and massing terms it is considered that the proposed dwellings are consistent with those seen elsewhere in the area, albeit a more contemporary scheme has been provided at the rear. Each of the dwellings has been provided with a private rear garden which will be enjoyed by future occupiers.

With regard to highway safety a new access junction will be provided onto High Street and the Local Highway Authority has confirmed that it has no objection to this proposal either in terms of its access arrangements, or in relation to traffic generation. The level of car parking provided complies with the maximum standards set out in the Cambridge Local Plan. The Transport Statement that accompanied the application has also indicated that the application would result in a decrease of traffic movements as compared to the previous and existing use. It is considered that due to the site's proximity to a number of alternative transport choices and the amenities and services that are within very easy walking distance of the site, this level of parking is appropriate.

In summary this application represents a high quality scheme in an urban area that will provide much needed and valued housing in a sustainable location. For all of the above reasons, we would invite you to support this planning application, and we very much hope you will feel able to do so.

Yours sincerely,

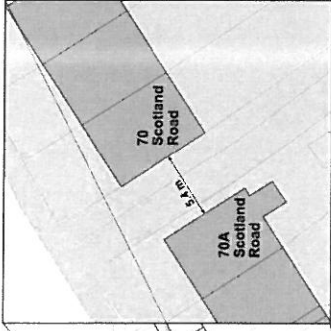
Colin Brown BA (Hons) MRTPI
Director

cc. John Evans, Planning Officer, Cambridge City Council

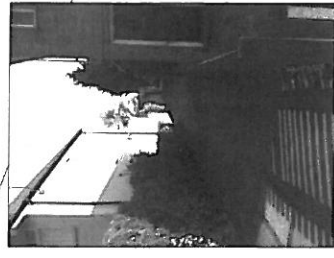
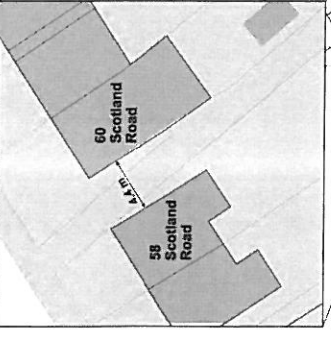
Enc. Copy of Gable Study
Copy of Mews Study
Window Hood Detail Sketch
Site Layout Plan (for reference)

- 1. The proposed development is shown in grey.
- 2. The existing buildings are shown in white.
- 3. The proposed development is shown in grey.
- 4. The existing buildings are shown in white.
- 5. The proposed development is shown in grey.
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- 16. The existing buildings are shown in white.
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- 18. The existing buildings are shown in white.
- 19. The proposed development is shown in grey.
- 20. The existing buildings are shown in white.

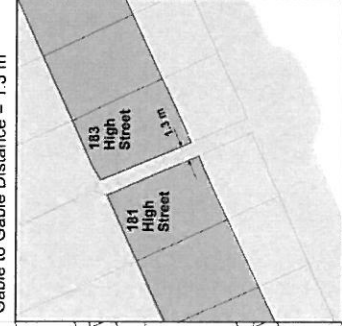
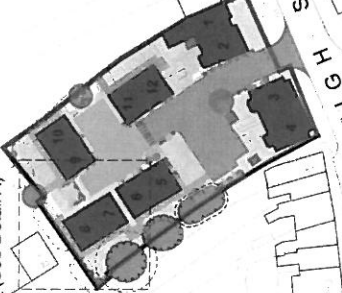
70 Scotland Road to 70A Scotland Road
Gable to Gable Distance = 5.4 m



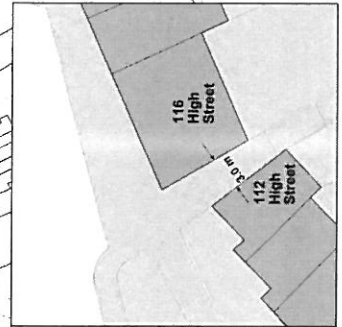
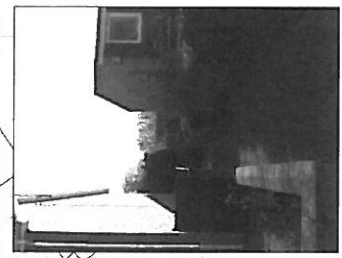
58 Scotland Road to 60 Scotland Road
Gable to Gable Distance = 4.4 m



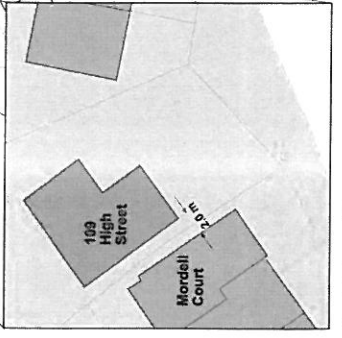
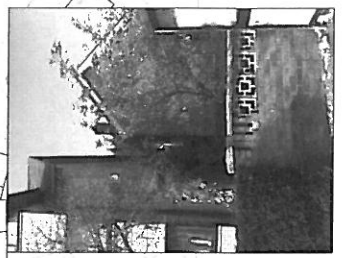
125 High Street to Proposed Plot 8
(See Detail A)



181 High Street to 183 High Street
Gable to Gable Distance = 1.3 m

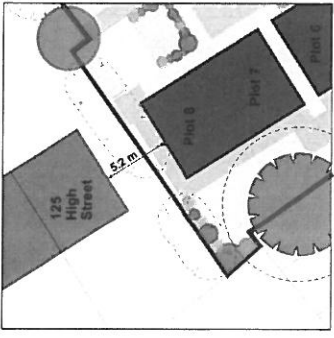


116 High Street to 112 High Street
Gable to Gable Distance = 3.0 m



Mordell Court (Flats) to 109 High Street
Gable to Gable Distance = 2.0 m

DETAIL A



125 High Street to Proposed Plot 8
Gable to Gable Distance = 5.2 m



Planning

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Mr N Cook & Mr D Brown
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Gable to Gable Distance Study

1:500 @ A1, 1:1000 @ A3
March 2012
1142 / P / 05

