

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL FORUM14 August 2013
10.00 am - 12.00 pm**Present:** Councillors**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****1 Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

2 Application and Petition Details 13/0646/FUL Gonville Hotel & Gresham House Gonville Place

Committee: Planning Committee

Date: 14 August 2013

Application No: 13/0646/FUL

Site Address: Gonville Hotel and Gresham House Gonville Place
Cambridge CB1 1LY

Description: Demolition of Gresham House and refurbishment and extension of Gonville Hotel to provide an additional 43 houses bedrooms and new spa / treatment rooms, with internal and external remodelling of the existing hotel to create and new dining area and hotel entrance, and associated external works and landscaping.

Applicant: TBC

Agent: Mr Colin Brown

Lead Petitioner: Mrs Phillipa Savage

Case Officer: Ms Angela Briggs

Text of Petition: Request the convening of a Development Control Forum in relation to planning application 13/0646/FUL regarding the redevelopment of the Gonville Hotel and Gresham House. We wish to discuss the application, Council planning officers and Members of the Planning Committee the possibility of modifying the scheme to retain the existing building and mitigate the impact on nearby residential property in terms of traffic noise and amenity.

Opening Remarks by Chair

The Chair outlined the role and purpose of the Development Control Forum. Those present were informed that no decisions would be taken at the meeting.

Case by Applicant Representative

Mr Martin Lindus (architect) made the following comments;

- 1) There is a need for the development, particularly for 4/5* accommodation in City Centre.
- 2) Emerging Local Plan recognises potential of Parkers' Piece area.
- 3) The hotel needs to remain competitive and invest in added services such as the proposed spa.
- 4) Need for further revenue to maintain trading position.
- 5) The requirement for additional bedrooms is critical, there are currently eighty four all of which have recently been upgraded but need in excess of up to one hundred and twenty four rooms to retain viability at 4* level.
- 6) Current hotel rooms are smaller than desirable which presents an opportunity to remodel and improve the hotel to a high quality both the interior and the exterior.

Mr Matthew Seaborn explained that he had researched the history of the site and the surrounding area beginning in 1813 and gave a brief outline up to the present day. The following points were then highlighted;

- 7) Looking at the current density of the area Gresham House has become an anomaly within the conservation area grain.
- 8) The building is of a poor composition and scale with ugly additions added over time.
- 9) The house itself does not reflect the character of the site but the area that surrounds it such as the important vistas of the trees.
- 10) The house is a collection of small rooms with low ceilings that could not be converted for the purpose of a 4* star hotel.
- 11) The interior is unremarkable.
- 12) The rear garden is very plain and is without merit but the garden element would be important to retain and all key elements would be kept.
- 13) In comparison to the surrounding buildings on Gresham road the House itself is small in scale and the site lends itself to development.
- 14) There would be no loss of amenity.

Case by Petitioners:

Mrs Pillipa Savage, lead petitioner raised the following points;

- 15) Although not a listed building Gresham House is recognised in the Conservation Area Appraisal and by the Cambridge City Council Conservation Office.

- 16) There were currently two developments on Parkers Piece which benefits the historic location and is sympathetic to the surroundings.
- 17) Questioned why the hotel could not be extended to keep in with the character of the existing building which would be welcomed.
- 18) The current building is very much in keeping with the street scene and adds to the village effect experienced in the area
- 19) The development does not comply with paragraphs 4/10 and 4/11 of the Cambridge Local Plan.
- 20) The proposed development does not retain any of the existing character. The new three storey property would be a flat roofed contemporary extension which would dominate this particular section of Gresham Road and would destroy the character of the area.
- 21) The proposed materials do not match the existing properties, particularly the listed buildings in close proximity to the building.
- 22) Number 3 & 3A Gresham Road are listed houses which stand opposite Gresham House and will be subjugated by the development.
- 23) Owen Webb House, a listed building opposite Gresham House is an example of a sympathetic development which respects the character of the conservation area.
- 24) Unsympathetic development is not the way forward and is not progress.
- 25) There would be a significant loss of trees to the area which ensures the privacy of neighbouring properties.
- 26) The building was contrary to the national planning policy framework, paragraph 13, and did not make a positive contribution to the conservation area.

Dr Mona Kelly explained that she lived opposite the proposed development and the following objections were made;

- 27) Gresham House and gardens lie within the conservation area of the new town and central conservation area. The building plays a significant part in balancing the existing street scene.
- 28) The site is located in a quiet residential area. The demolition and the proposed development could result in disturbance to the neighbouring properties.
- 29) Gresham House is set opposite listed buildings, Figtrees Cottages and Owen Webb House both of which are an integral part of the historic and picturesque gateway from Gonville Place and Parker's Piece to Gresham Road. The House in relation to these properties plays a vital role in currently balancing and enhancing the aesthetic and historical value.
- 30) The proposed development would be out of keeping with the existing street scene, not in keeping with the scale of the street scene, would

overlook the surrounding properties and would only have a negative impact to the area.

- 31) The developers state that the development would be the same height as Cobwebs No.4 Gresham Road, but this house has a completely different volume, setting and proximity to any opposite properties, so is not a fair comparison.
- 32) The proposed development will have windows that will look directly into the garden of 3 Gresham Road and result in loss of privacy and its lack of use as an enjoyable space.
- 33) The increase in foot fall and vehicle access would also have an impact on the privacy of No 3 and 3a as neither houses are set back from the footpath and are particularly sensitive to road traffic and footfall.
- 34) Previously an application for a block of flats to be built behind Owen Webb House was refused because following a planning site visit to No 3 Gresham Road, it was apparent that the flats would look directly into the garden.
- 35) The subsequent sympathetic development of five town houses to the rear of Owen Webb House stipulated that the house immediately adjacent to the garden of No 3 Gresham Road was restricted to a two storey development and not permitted to have windows above ground floor level to the west facing elevation to protect privacy to No 3 Gresham Road and it's garden.
- 36) The development of a three -storey extension will also exclude the use of the living rooms and bedrooms of No's 3 and 3a Gresham Road as private areas.
- 37) The erection of such a large three storey building would affect the light onto No's 3 and 3a Gresham Road. The fig-tree which grows on the west facing wall of No 3 Gresham Road had been reported as being one of/if not the oldest in the UK. The overshadowing and loss of sun for this tree would be debilitating.

Dr Kelly presented a petition entitled 'Save Gresham House' with at the time of the meeting four hundred and two signatures. A copy is attached to the original set of minutes of this meeting.

Mrs Darcey Weaver then addressed the meeting. The Committee heard the following objections;

- 38) The proposal to build a 43-bedroom extension to the Gonville Hotel would have an impact on the traffic congestion already experienced in Gonville Road.
- 39) The planned use of the gate of Gresham House as an entrance to the Hotel Spa has not been used by the hotel for access to date. The gate

opens directly onto the cycle path at Gresham Road at a point where the road narrows significantly and an increase in pedestrian traffic through the gate would increase the risk of congestion and collisions.

- 40) Although spa visitors would be encouraged to use the local Queen Anne's car park, the loss of parking spaces at the front of the hotel would result in an overspill onto Gresham Road, especially relevant to wedding receptions and use of the Spa which would remain open in the evening. This end of Gresham Road would inevitably be used as a drop-off point with subsequent increase in turnarounds in the area outside No 3 and 3a Gresham Road.
- 41) The increase in traffic would cause difficulties for pedestrians and cyclists who use this traffic restricted safe cycle route which is part of the East West Bike path.

Mrs Weaver then showed the Committee a video of the traffic movement turning into Gresham Place over a thirty minute period and the constant flow of cyclists and pedestrians.

Case Officer Comments:

Mrs Angela Briggs acknowledged that both proposals had attracted concerns from third parties, which were as follows;

- 42) The loss of Gresham House as a local heritage asset
- 43) The impact of the proposed scheme on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and nearby listed Buildings.
- 44) Poor design.
- 45) The impact on the residential amenities of nearby residents, from potential over-looking and noise and disturbance from hotel residents and plant.
- 46) Traffic implications – from cars potentially using Gresham Road as a 'drop-off', rather than using the main entrance via Gonville Place
- 47) Potential impact on cyclists and pedestrians who regularly use Gresham Road.
- 48) A letter of support had been received from the Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce.

The following consultees had been consulted and the following comments made;

- 49) Urban Design and Conservation Team – no objection to the extensions and alterations to the existing Gonville Hotel building. However, strongly object to the new hotel extension and Spa on the basis of poor design

- and impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The demolition of Gresham House, therefore, also cannot be supported.
- 50) Local Highways Authority – no objections, subject to confirmation as to whether a contribution needs to be made to the East Area Corridor Transport Plan.
 - 51) Sustainability Officers – no objections to the use of a gas fired Combined Heat and Power unit to meet the requirements of Policy 8/16 of the Local Plan. Object to potential impact of surface water flooding.
 - 52) Environmental Health – object. Negative impact on air quality in the Air Quality Management Area.
 - 53) Anglian Water – No impact on wastewater treatment and foul sewerage treatment, however the surface water strategy is unacceptable.
 - 54) SuSTRANS (charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport) – object. Transport Assessment inaccurate.
 - 55) Landscape Officer – parts of the scheme are supported, however cannot wholly support application because of the impact on the visual amenity of the area and the scale and length of the Spa building will be too dominant on the streetscape of Gresham Road.
 - 56) Trees Officer – no objection subject to conditions.
 - 57) Archaeology Team – Potential archaeological impacts. Recommend condition requiring a brief for archaeology works.
 - 58) Policy Team – no objection to the principle of the hotel expansion. Possible issues with the loss of the two residential flats (policy 6/3 – loss of housing).
 - 59) Public Art Officer – Public Art proposal is inadequate, therefore cannot comment.

Members Questions:

- 60) Could the status of the building be confirmed?
 - A) The building is not listed or recorded as a building of local interest.
- 64) Are there existing residents at Gresham House?
 - A) The ground floor is an area which is used by the hotel and there are two flats above ground floor which are not connected to the hotel. One flat may be currently occupied.
- 65) Could you confirm how those people visiting the spa will be monitored to ensure that they are not parking or dropping off down Gresham Road?
 - A) The spa would cater for a maximum of 12 day customers who would be educated by staff not to drive down Gresham Road and would be encouraged to park in the Queen Anne Terrace car park.
- 66) Is the developer aware of the renewable energy issues?
 - A) Intend on meeting the 10% deadlines
- 67) What are the main objections from the petitioners?

A) Main concern is the demolition of Gresham House.

Summing on Behalf of Applicant

- 68) It is not feasible to deliver hotel requirements whilst retaining existing building.
- 69) The building is felt to make a neutral contribution to the Conservation area.
- 70) There is no evidence and no reference to the building's character despite extensive research.
- 71) The hotel is needed in the City center to meet demand.
- 72) Loss may be regretted by some but necessary if the hotel to improve and remain competitive.

Summing up by the Petitioners

- 73) The Hotel development should be balanced to the environment which residents would not be opposed to.
- 74) The proposed design of the large flat roof would dominate the landscape and be out of keeping with the surrounding properties.
- 75) Pictures of the proposed design were misleading.
- 76) The planned use of the gate of Gresham House as an entrance to the Hotel Spa was an accident waiting to happen.

Final Comments of the Chair

The Chair observed the following:

- 77) Notes of the Development Control Forum would be made available to relevant parties.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm

CHAIR