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PLANNING

To All Members of the West Area Committee

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Our ref: PMcK/CWB
Your ref:

28 October 2011

Dear Councillor

**11/091/FUL – PROPOSED ERECTION OF 4no. FOUR BED DETACHED RESIDENTIAL UNITS, TOGETHER WITH 9 CAR PARKING SPACES, CYCLE PARKING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING WORKS (FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING OUTBUILDINGS TO THE SIDE AND REAR OF 82 RICHMOND ROAD)
82 RICHMOND ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 3PT**

I am writing to you in advance of the forthcoming West Area Committee Meeting on Thursday 3rd November 2011, when the above-mentioned planning application is to be considered with a recommendation of approval. I am the applicants' agent. The submission is a joint one on behalf of the present site owner, Mr E Seaby and Richmond Road (Cambridge) LLP, a joint venture set up by established local developers Enterprise Property Group and Laragh House Developments. Attached to this letter are some images of schemes carried out by the two companies working elsewhere in Cambridge in joint venture.

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. 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.

A second public exhibition was held following the submission of the application and again a series of amended plans have been presented to the Council to respond to some of the key points raised by the Local Community. The alterations made to the scheme are summarised in paragraph 2.4 of the Committee Report and are therefore not repeated here. The public consultation undertaken in support of this scheme has perhaps been unusually extensive for a scheme for this size but this has, in the applicant's opinion, been of great benefit to this development proposal.

In addition to these exhibitions, the applicants have also had a number of individual one to one meetings with immediate neighbours and have sought at all times to reach consensus on individual elements of the scheme.

Directors: John Callin • Simon Dazeley • Colin Brown • David Foord • Desmond Hirsch

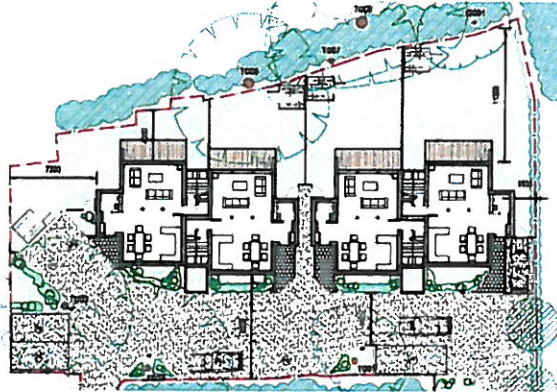
Associates: Sally Fletcher • Nicholas Muncey • John Russell • Justin Bainton • Paul Belton • Graham Smith Consultant: David Ward

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The application site is in both a sustainable location and is a previously developed site and as a result the principle of development is supported in both national and local planning policy advice. There is local support for the principle of residential development at this location with the general feelings reported to the applicant being that a more defined and permanent use for this site that is well integrated with the surrounding residential use of the area is something that can be welcomed.

The final proposed site layout is shown below.



Notwithstanding the extensive public consultation undertaken there are, as one might expect, still some local concerns being raised in respect of this development proposal, as summarised within the Committee Report. Prior to the Committee's consideration of this application I did therefore want to take the opportunity to comment on the following key matters.

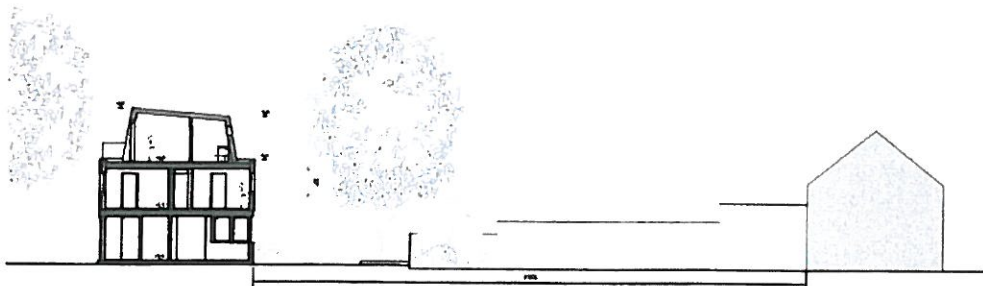
Design

With regard to the design a more modern and contemporary style of building has been proposed here. Given the site's naturally concealed location outside of any area of visual influence when viewed from Richmond Road, it is considered that there is not a necessity to replicate or mimic the appearance or design of existing housing in the area. This is a unique site and as a result a distinctive scheme has been proposed.

In response to comments and issues raised by local residents following the submission of the application, adjustments have been made to the scheme with the design simplified and the palette of materials updated. Clean lines and a modern form, further emphasized by the use of materials (masonry, timber shingles and slate tiles) help to create a striking building which in our opinion is successful in achieving an interesting and worthy addition to the local area. The more contemporary design also allows the bespoke fenestration treatment to be applied to the building which ensures the development enjoys a sympathetic relationship with the surrounding built form, a matter discussed in more detail below.



With regard to the scale, the proposed dwellings are marginally higher than those present within Richmond Road however this is not considered to be to the detriment of the development. This view is supported within the committee report which states that the proposed dwellings will **"have a positive impact on their setting"**. This Committee Report also advises that the proposal will not be out scale with surrounding residential development, a view we again very much agree with. The characteristics of the locality have been used to inform the massing of development here and the overall proportions of the buildings are considered appropriate to their context. The section drawings submitted with the application, and repeated below, illustrate this. It will be seen that the dwellings proposed have accommodation within the roofspace and so are not dissimilar in this context to other dwellings in the area that have had 'loft conversions'.



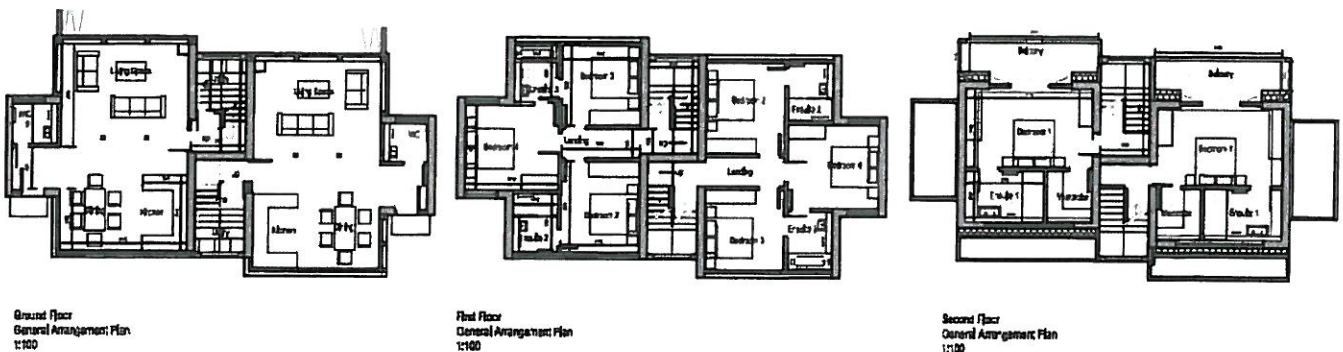
1107-RR-BK_Site Section_04.10.11

Residential Amenity

In relation to the amenity of the surrounding residents we support the view taken within the Committee Report that the proposal adequately respects the residential amenity of all surrounding residents and note the following key points: -

- A generous separation distance of about 32 metres is provided between the frontage of the new scheme and the rear elevations of the properties fronting onto Richmond Road (none of the occupants of these houses have objected to the application);
- The substantial vegetation present within the gardens of the Richmond Road properties, alongside the common boundaries with the site, and within the site further lessens the impact of the proposal on its surroundings;
- Any views from the proposed dwellings into the surrounding properties will be at oblique angles, and at some distance, and no harmful overlooking will result;
- The proposal does not incorporate any primary living accommodation at either first or second floor levels facing towards Richmond Road;
- The windows on the second floor are at a high level and as result no overlooking will result. It is expected that these windows will be obscure glazed, certainly the bathroom windows as a minimum;
- Two additional birch trees have been introduced along the boundary between the site and 78 Richmond Road; and
- A suitable level of separation is provided between the proposal and 96 Richmond Road and no windows are present in the flank elevation that faces this property.

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. The General Arrangement Plan for each of the dwellings is shown below.



Access and Highway safety

There are in our view no issues relating to traffic generation resulting from the proposed development. The proposal will generate an average of two vehicular movements in each peak hour and Richmond Road has the capacity to cope with this minimal increase. If the 22 garages on site and the small commercial unit were to be reused, they have the potential to generate traffic substantially in excess of what this proposal will generate. The new in and out

loop system also provides a better access arrangement for the entire site and ensures that traffic will be more dispersed than at present, where the vast majority of activity, would, if the site were put back into use, take place between the houses at 90-94 Richmond Road.

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 proposal presented will in our view result in material improvement in relation to the highway layout and traffic generation and we again support the Officer's recommendation of approval in this regard.

Local Employment

The two applicant companies employ local people, and generate employment for construction staff. This is a feature of small, local building companies, which is at variance with the activities and methods of the larger PLC house builders who tend to employ contractors working across a much wider geographic area. The recently published draft National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that development activity has considerable potential to create jobs and stimulate the economic recovery and so granting early permissions for acceptable development schemes such as this one is an important response to the current climate.

Re-Use of Existing House at 82 Richmond Road

The proposal includes provision for the re-use of the existing house at 82 Richmond Road which has been a local bone of contention for many years as the house has sat vacant. The applicants are purchasing this property from the current owner as part of the development site, and will refurbish it for sale to the open market. This therefore represents a 'windfall' with one further net addition to the housing stock (the house was last occupied over 30 years ago).

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

