

9 DCNC2005/0103/F - DEMOLITION OF ON-SITE CABINS AND 1970'S EXTENSION. CONVERSION AND EXTENSION TO SHARED HOUSE AT GRANGE HOUSE, THE GRANGE, PINSLEY ROAD, LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 8NP For: Marches Housing Association Per Bernard Taylor Association Elizabeth House 486 Didsbury Road Heaton Mersey Stockport Sk4 3bs

Date Received:
12th January 2005

Ward:
Leominster South

Grid Ref:
49871, 59014

Expiry Date:
9th March 2005

Local Member: Councillors R Burke and J P Thomas

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Grange House, a substantial red-brick, Edwardian house, is located in the north-east corner of Etnam Street car park, and on the south-east corner of The Grange. The building is vacant, last occupied as offices. There is a portacabin type structure adjacent.
- 1.2 The site is located in a central shopping and commercial area, as shown on the Town Centre Inset Map in Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire), and within the Leominster Conservation Area.
- 1.3 This application proposes the refurbishment and extension of Grange House to provide 12 self-contained apartments, each containing bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen; a reception area, interview room, homeless to home office (Outreach), skills training/meeting room, laundry and communal room.

2. Policies

2.1 Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire)

- A1 – Managing the district's assets and resources
- A2 – Settlement hierarchy
- A21 – Development within Conservation Areas
- A24 – Scale and character of development
- A32 – Development within town centre shopping and commercial areas
- A54 – Protection of residential amenity
- A61 – Community, social and recreational facilities

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

- CTC7 – Development and features of historic and architectural importance
- CTC9 – Development criteria

2.3 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

HBA6 – New development within Conservation Areas
TCR1 – Central shopping and commercial areas
TCR11 – Loss of existing offices
DR1 – Design
CF5 – New community facilities

- 2.3 PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
PPG3 – Housing
PPS6 – Planning for Town Centres
PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment

3. Planning History

- 3.1 None.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Environment Agency: No objection.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Traffic Manager: Recommends condition - H29
- 4.3 Conservation Manager: No objection.
- 4.4 Environmental Health Officer: No objection.
- 4.5 Strategic Housing Services: Fully supports this Planning Application, and has worked in partnership with Marches Housing Association, Shelter and Council colleagues in Housing Strategy (Supporting People) to bring this planning application forward to the current stage of a Full application.

Herefordshire Council has committed £1.04M of its LSVT capital resources to help fund the development of the scheme at Grange House and, on the revenue side, the Council's Supporting People Commissioning Body has allocated £150, 000 per annum of Supporting People funding to help fund the revenue support costs of managing the scheme.

The scheme is intended to help the Council fulfil its statutory duty to the Homeless – The Homeless Order 2003, introduced on 1st April 2004 – by providing good quality well managed accommodation to help meet the needs of temporarily homeless households. This scheme in Leominster is aimed at meeting the need in the Northern part of the County, and it will complement the similar facility at Pomona Place in Hereford, recently completed with funding from the Council, and now managed, by Stonham Housing Association, which was opened by Lord Rooker on 19th Jan'05.

The scheme will contribute towards meeting the Council's Strategic aims as set out in the following strategies:

- Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008: one key action identified is to, “Reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation as temporary housing through the provision of alternative supported temporary accommodation”
- Housing Investment Strategy 2003 – 2006: one target for investment being, “The development of specialised accommodation with related support for vulnerable people e.g. Extra Care housing – being targeted at Ledbury Road, homeless households – the Pomona Place scheme in Hereford and this proposed scheme in Leominster.
- The Herefordshire Partnership – Housing Ambition – meeting Herefordshire’s accommodation needs
- The Council’s commitment to Central Government of minimal use of Bed and Breakfast in 2004/05 and its LPSA agreement which requires the Council to implement services to prevent repeat homelessness during 04/05, and to help the Council continue this ethos in future years.
- The Council’s statutory Best Value Performance indicators that relate to homelessness – nos. 62, 64, 183 and 203: the aim being to help improve performance as measured by those indicators.

Homelessness is a very serious problem confronting the Council: figures for the last 6 years show that homelessness acceptances have risen by 92.9% in that period and, as at 2003/04, stood at almost 500 households.

The scheme will have a direct positive impact on the Council’s ability to house temporarily Homelessness households in suitable accommodation. The scheme would provide 24-hour support for residents via staffing and concierge services.

The proposed conversion works to Grange House would provide good quality housing to help meet the needs as above and will meet current Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards, including an EcoHomes ‘GOOD’ rating as a minimum.

5. Representations

5.1 Leominster Town Council: 'Recommends refusal as the development is:

- 1) Contrary to Policy A21 of Leominster District Local Plan - Development in Conservation Areas
 - A) Need to avoid unsympathetic alterations and impact of changes of use upon the characteristics of the area
 - B) Impact of changes in relation to existing uses

2) Perceived by residents as a threat to the amenities and heritage of The Grange

3) The wrong use of the building

4) There will be policing difficulties.

Whilst the Town Council is sympathetic to the plight of the homeless, there are alternative buildings which could be considered for this use.'

5.2 13 letters of objection have been received. The main planning points raised are:

- a) Herefordshire Council has failed to demonstrate that it has explored any alternative use of this site which would be more in keeping with the sensitive nature of the setting.

- b) Herefordshire Council has failed to explore alternative sites to provide homeless accommodation at The Masonic Hall, the former Russell Baldwin and Bright Offices, The Hop Pole Inn and Nordon Hall.
 - c) The proposal lacks imagination.
 - d) It contradicts the Council's tourism policy.
 - e) The location of the site is socially irresponsible.
 - f) The conversion of the old library as a unit for local youngsters has let the community down. There is a constant stream of antisocial behaviour.
 - g) It will be harmful to the setting of Grange Court, a Grade II* Listed Building.
 - h) Disturbance to the peace of the area.
 - i) The area is a known haven for antisocial behaviour - drug addiction, consumption of alcohol, and general rowdyism and this application will make this worse.
- 5.3 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford, and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 This application has been amended taking into account comments raised by the Chief Conservation Officer. The amended proposal maintains the character of this imposing building, ensuring the extension is subservient in scale so as not to be detrimental to the appearance of this imposing Edwardian building, to the Conservation Area, or to the setting of the nearby Grade II* Listed building.
- 6.2 The proposal is to provide managed accommodation to help meet the needs of temporarily homeless households in the northern part of the Herefordshire. In terms of use the multiple occupation of this former office to provide residential accommodation is considered acceptable. Comments raised by local residents have raised strong concerns, particularly with regard to anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse. While fears of local people can be a material consideration in the determination of a planning application, the planning system does not exist to regulate individual behaviour and your officers cannot justify a reason for refusal on that basis alone.
- 6.3 The application proposes 5 parking spaces. While, this is below the recommended parking standards of 1.5 per apartment the site does adjoin a public car park. In terms of sustainability, the re-use of this building to provide residential accommodation is considered acceptable in that it is close to public transport links, health facilities, shopping leisure and other local services.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 - A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2 - B02 (Matching external materials (extension))

Reason: To ensure the external materials harmonise with the existing building.

3 - A09 (Amended plans) (7 March 2005)

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the amended plans.

4 - H29 (Secure cycle parking provision)

Reason: To ensure that there is adequate provision for secure cycle accommodation within the application site, encouraging alternative modes of transport in accordance with both local and national planning policy.

5 - G04 (Landscaping scheme (general)),

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

6 - G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general)

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

Informative:

1 - N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.