

11 SE2003/0909/F - CONVERSION TO A PRIVATE DWELLING. ICE HOUSE, WILTON ROAD, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE**For: Mr C Hughes & Mr. G. Downes per Geoff Jones, Architect, 53 Broad Street, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7DY****Date Received: 17th June 2003 Ward: Ross on Wye West Grid Ref: 5964 2407****Expiry Date: 12th August 2003**

Local Members: Councillor G Lucas, Councillor M R Cunningham

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 This building is situated on the south-west side of Wilton Road opposite the junction with Royal Parade and is the first building encountered when approaching Ross on Wye from Wilton. The building, viewed from Wilton Road is a low single-storey structure with aluminium shopfront and ridge roof. However the building has further floors below the Wilton Road level and the base is at about the same level as the adjacent flats in Wye Street. It thus acts as a retaining structure to this section of Wilton Road. There is some evidence that it was built as an ice house but this is not certain. It is not listed but is historically and architecturally important especially in view of its prominent position.
- 1.2 It is proposed to convert the building into a single dwellinghouse. The scheme includes the erection of an additional storey. As submitted this would have had a monopitch roof but following discussions with officers a ridge roof is now proposed, about 1.5m. higher at eaves and ridge levels than the existing building. Additional windows of a modern style are proposed for the top 3 storeys (including the new storey) in the rear elevation (facing the River Wye) and top 4 storeys facing south-west (down Wilton Road). Fenestration has also been amended to meet design concerns and protect the privacy of occupiers of the maisonettes in Wye Street. The converted building would accommodate two double bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, living room and kitchen-dining room with the lowest two floors an office and gymnasium. The lowest floor has some natural light via glass blocks.
- 1.3 There is no space for car parking or garden but the land to the south-west side would be fenced and a series of short decks and external stairs formed linking Wilton Road level to the two floors below.

2. Policies**2.1 Planning Policy Guidance**

PPG3

Housing

PPG15

Planning and the Historic Environment

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

Policy CTC1	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy CTC2	Area of Great Landscape Value
Policy CTC9	Development Requirements
Policy CTC13	Conversion of Buildings
Policy CTC14	Criteria for the Conversion of Buildings in Rural Areas

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

Policy C4	AONB Landscape Protection
Policy C5	Development within AONB
Policy C6	Landscape and AONB
Policy C8	Development Within Area of Great Landscape Value
Policy C9	Landscape Features
Policy C23	New Development Affecting Conservation Areas
Policy SH5	Housing Land in Ross on Wye
Policy GD1	General Development Criteria
Policy 2 (Vol III)	New Housing Developments
Policy 17 (Vol III)	Re-use of Existing Buildings

3. Planning History

- 3.1 SH81/003PF Replacement shop front - Permitted 18.2.81

4. Consultation Summary

- 4.1 Welsh Water recommend that conditions be imposed regarding drainage of the site.

5. Representations

- 5.1 The applicants' agent makes the following submission:

- (1) It is understood that the building was used in days gone by to store ice for use in the town, though no description of the manner of storage or where the ice came from can be found.
- (2) The building was last used as a shop, storing and selling household electrical goods, mainly washing machines, and before that it was a motorcycle showroom and shop. It has been empty since December 2001.
- (3) The building has been broken into many times recently.
- (4) The building is mainly constructed of stone, the south-east wall, being the retaining wall to Wilton Road, is ramped at an angle of approximately 7 degrees making the floor area at the bottom noticeably smaller than that at the top. There are at present six floors to the building. The top floor is accessible directly from Wilton Road on the south-east side.
- (5) To the south-west of the building is an area of land approximately 6 m x 10 m currently occupied by a concrete ramp and steps and surrounded by metal fencing.

- (6) The proposal is to convert the Icehouse to a dwelling. The upper parts of the building command superb views of the river and countryside to the south and west and therefore these elevations will be glazed to take advantage of this. The south-east elevation is directly on to the footpath of Wilton Road. For reasons of sound reduction and privacy, this elevation will be solid and fairly blank. This new top floor will be added to achieve the required accommodation as the bottom two floors will be without any external openings, except for a fire escape door at the lowest level, and the only natural light will be obtained from a window of opaque glass blocks set in the shape of the huge brick arch.
- (7) The Building Regulations require a means of escape from every floor in the case of fire. Therefore, the new top floor will have an escape window, then below that the living room has access onto the open deck to the south west, as does the kitchen/dining below it, and the second bedroom below that. These escape decks will also act as the outdoor space for the dwelling.
- (8) Views from The Prospect towards the river will not be affected.

5.2 Town Council has no objections providing that the development is in keeping with an AONB.

5.3 Two letters have been received raising the following concerns, some of which relate to the original submission. Any further representations will be reported at the Committee meeting.

- stainless steel roof unsuitable material and would impinge on roofscape when viewed from above;
- horizontal strips of glazing out of character with the building - preferable if glazing broken up by solid masonry/brickwork and not carried right to corner of building; are sunscreens appropriate?
- Wilton Road frontage unduly stark, exacerbated by vertical timber boarding - small areas of fixed glazing or some other detailing would be preferable to soften this facade;
- railed decking too prominent viewed from below if not screened by new planting;
- occupiers of Riverview use sides of buildings as social areas as rear garden completely hemmed in - this area would be overlooked by new windows or balcony, as would lounge of one unit and flat below's bedroom;
- is new balcony an amenity area or for access only? - previously existing platform largely screened by trees and shrubs but plan shows trees removed presumably to allow use as balconies and uninterrupted views.

5.3 Letters have been written in support for the following reasons:

- (1) Ice house has much to offer as a house of local interest and glass elevations add to its individual nature - an example of good, imaginative design and use of traditional space in a modern context, will make positive contribution to local area.
- (2) A health risk as used for drug taking and regularly vandalised.
- (3) The old motorcycle building is an eyesore.
- (4) Trees to side of site need urgent attention (falling down and a danger to children who climb them) - slopes need re-landscaping, replacing what has been removed with fencing to stop children climbing up to Wilton Road.
- (5) One response to the revised scheme considers they are more appropriate and their earlier objection is withdrawn.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The site is within the town boundary defined in the Local Plan. It adjoins residential properties in Wye Street and it is considered that a dwelling would be an appropriate use. The building, although not listed, is of local historic and architectural interest locally which it is important to retain. Currently however the Wilton Road elevation (an old-fashioned aluminium shopfront) is unattractive. The building has been subject to vandalism and deterioration of the fabric. Conversion to residential use would resolve these problems provided the scheme respected the character of the building, was not intrusive in the landscape and did not harm the amenities of neighbours.
- 6.2 Viewed from Wilton Road the building appears to be a bungalow. The extra storey would not appear out of scale but there are some reservations regarding the elevational treatment, particularly the additional glazing in the rear (north-west) and side (south-west) elevations. The Chief Conservation Officer would prefer the increase in height to be kept to a minimum but points out that the overhanging roof and brise soleil (external blinds) would help to reduce the visual impact of the glass resulting from its reflective quality. These aspects could be given further consideration.
- 6.3 The extra height of the building would not be intrusive however or block views from the town of the River and countryside. The building is clearly visible from the walk along the River bank and would be more prominent if the mature trees to the west were to be cut down. This is not part of the current proposal but a survey has been undertaken which recommends removal of most of the trees and it is understood that the appropriate application will be submitted to effect this. Nevertheless the strong vertical shape would be an attractive part of the townscape which would be seen against the cliff below The Prospect. Care would be needed regarding the detailed design and materials of the external stairs, fencing and decking to ensure that they are not intrusive. The large area of glazing could be brightly illuminated by internal lighting if curtains or blinds are not closed. It is not considered however that this is grounds for refusal.
- 6.4 Although the building is close to the rear of the flats the relative heights mean that any overlooking is at an acute, downward angle. To ensure privacy of the external areas to the side of the flats additional screen fencing has been provided by the stairs. It is considered that there would not be significant loss of privacy.

RECOMMENDATION

That subject to the submission of acceptable revised proposals regarding design and external appearance the officers named in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers be authorised to issue planning permission subject to the following conditions and any additional conditions considered necessary by officers:

- 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 B01 (Samples of external materials)

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings.

3 C02 (Approval of details)

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of this building of [special] architectural or historical interest.

4 E18 (No new windows in specified elevation)

Reason: In order to protect the residential amenity of adjacent properties and to protect the character of the building.

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.