

SIDMOUTH SIDFORD
(Sidmouth)

07/2869/FUL
(FULL)

Target Date: 18.12.2007

Applicant:

P Mitchell

Location:

Land adjacent to 148 Sidford Road, Sidford

Proposal:

Demolition of building and erection of dwelling

CONSULTATIONS

Devon County Council - County Highway Authority

The access to the site is not ideally situated with it being positioned so close to the signalised crossroads. In addition, visibility at the access onto the A375 is impeded by roadside boundaries. Despite these deficiencies I am mindful of the fact that the site is currently used as a builder's yard, which has the potential to generate a similar or greater level of traffic than the proposed dwelling, and therefore a highway objection would be unreasonable. The Highway Authority recommends that the following condition shall be incorporated in any grant of planning permission:-

"A turning area, parking spaces and access drive thereto shall be laid out and maintained for those purposes in accordance with the submitted plan. Reason – To ensure the provision of adequate facilities within the site for the traffic generated by the development."

Environmental Health

Recommends the following conditions:-

"During the demolition and construction phases no works of demolition or construction shall take place other than within the hours Mondays – Fridays 08.00 to 18.00, Saturdays 08.00 – 13.00 and not at all on Sundays or Bank Holidays."

No waste materials shall be burnt upon the land within the application site."

Property Services, Economy Directorate

Confirms no objection from an estates management point of view. The site adjoins the Council's public open space and footpath link from Sidford Road to the public car park and the proposed development would not adversely affect this land.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL

Recommends Approval.

WARD MEMBERS

No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

App. No.	Proposal	Decision	Date
81/P0542	New store sheds for builder's yard.	Approved	02.06.1981
79/C0438	Two one-bedroomed flats.	Refused	07.08.1978
74/C0126	Replacement of garage and store with flat over.	Refused	03.09.1974

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy:

PPS 1 - Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS 3 - Housing
PPG4 – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms
PPG 13 – Transport
PG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment

Devon Structure Plan 2001 – 2016

Policy ST1 – Sustainable Development
Policy ST3 – Self-Sufficiency of Devon's Communities
Policy ST4 – Infrastructure Provision
Policy ST15 – Area Centres
Policy ST18a – Mix and Type of Housing
Policy ST20 – Re-assessing and Safeguarding Employment Land
Policy CO6 – Quality of New Development
Policy CO7 – Historic Settlements and Buildings
Policy CO11 – Conserving Energy Resources
Policy CO13 – Protecting Water Resources and Flood Defence
Policy TR1 – Devon Travel Strategy
Policy TR2 – Co-ordinating Land Use/Travel Planning
Policy TR5 – Hierarchy of Modes
Policy TR7 – Walking and Cycling
Policy TR10 – Strategic Road Network and Roadside Service Areas

East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011

Policy S2 – Built up Area Boundaries for Area Centres and Local Centres
Policy S4 – Development within Built up Area Boundaries
Policy D1 – Design and Local Distinctiveness
Policy D2 – Sustainable Construction
Policy D4 – Landscape Requirements
Policy EN11 – Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas
Policy EN21 – Surface Run-off Implications of New Development
Policy H1 – Residential Land Provision
Policy E1 – Provision of Employment Land
Policy E3 – Safeguarding Employment Land and Premises
Policy RE3 – Open Space Provision in New Housing Development
Policy TA1 – Accessibility of New Development
Policy TA7 – Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access
Policy TA9 – Parking Provision in New Development

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

This 16m x 12m rectangular plot of land lies on the south east side of the A375 separated from its frontage by a small area of landscaping (owned and managed by the Local Authority). The

crown of a substantial holly on this Council landscape strip overhangs the north western part of the application site.

The whole of the plot falls within the built-up area of Sidmouth, and the Sidford Conservation Area designation abuts the site to the north and west.

The plot is set about 1m below the level of the main road, with a gentle incline on its 3-4m wide access drive. To the south west the gabled end of no. 148 Sidford Road defines the site boundary. This 2-storey and attic house is the end of a straight terrace of four brick and slate-roofed homes, each with 2-storey bay window projections fronting onto Sidford Road, which are set behind modest gardens separated from the footway by dwarf brick walls and railings. To the south east of the site the half hipped roof of the 2-story Surgery building stands within a few metres of the site boundary, visible from Sidford Road and the Sidford Cross junction with the A3025. A pedestrian link with mainly grassed border edges the north east boundary of the plot.

The site is occupied by a single storey monopitch-roofed range of storage sheds, constructed in blockwork with corrugated sheet fibre cement roofing. A very narrow block and sheet roofed structure stands against the flank boundary of the rear garden/yard of no. 148, next to which an access gate leads from this neighbouring garden onto the site.

The property was most recently used as a builder's store and still contains a large stock of building materials and waste. A good rubble stone wall, some 1.5 m high, defines the north west boundary and a brick wall of similar height borders the north east side of the short driveway.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application is presented to the Development Control Committee in accordance with the Council's Delegation Scheme as it comprises a "Minor" category application where the Town Council recommends the opposite to the Head of Planning and Countryside Services.

Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of all existing structures on the site and the construction of a 2-storey 3-bedroomed house, together with 1 parking space, a turning head and a small rear garden. The proposal comprises a brick and slate building, with simple dual pitched roof, and a short, fully gabled 2-storey forward projection. The front of the house would stand approximately 5 m back from the building line of the neighbouring terrace, (no.s 142 – 148), just forward of the rear wall plane of the terrace. Double hung sash windows (material unspecified) are proposed for all ground and first floor fenestration (except for a pair of French windows on the rear elevation to serve the living room) on three sides of the building. No openings are proposed on the south west elevation of the new house (facing towards the flank of no. 148).

A small garden area is indicated between the new building and the surgery. A 3m wide parking space is shown between the new building and the existing boundary of no. 148, and a turning head is proposed in front of the new house, both hardsurfaced in brick paving. No alterations to the existing drive are shown.

CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT

The main planning issues to be considered for this proposal are:

- The principle of an additional dwelling in this location;
- The loss of employment land;
- The impact of the design and layout of the development on its context;
- The effect of the proposal on the adjoining Conservation Area;
- The impact of the development on neighbouring residences/uses;
- Transport and access matters, and
- Sustainability issues.

Additional Dwelling

The site lies in the built up area of Sidmouth, within a mix of other land uses (predominantly housing, with community facilities and public open space) and close to a number of retail and other commercial units focussed around the crossroads. The site is well served by pedestrian links and by public transport. The grain of development in the area is mixed, but with some regular, compact terracing of houses to the south of the site. With the development of an additional home on this plot, the resultant housing density for the locality would be appropriate to its built-up area status. This is considered to be an acceptable location for a new dwelling from a strategic viewpoint, subject to the satisfaction of other relevant planning policy.

Loss of Employment Land

The plot represents a small enclave of employment land within this part of Sidmouth, contributing to a sustainable mix of uses that the Development Plan seeks to promote. Modest plots of land and relatively inexpensive premises, that can provide local employment opportunities within walking distance of housing areas, should be safeguarded to encourage sustainable working practices and the self-sufficiency of communities. No evidence of efforts to market the site for use as a builder's store or other employment use has been submitted. No case has been made for the loss of the existing function on the grounds of it causing disturbance or being a "bad neighbour". Therefore the normal presumption in favour of retaining the site for small scale employment purposes should prevail in this case, as no justification has been provided to set aside relevant national and local policies.

Design and Layout

Overall, it is felt that the design and layout of the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the visual quality of the locality. The proposed form of the building comprises a fairly standard modern unit, with little distinctive embellishment. The unit would be broad in frontage but low in ridge height compared with the individual houses making up the neighbouring terrace, with which it would be read. This would result in the new dwelling being at odds with the vertical emphasis of the adjoining group, and would create a rather blunt and squat structure as a weak visual terminus to this terrace, especially when viewed from the busy crossroads.

The proposed design does not reflect or compliment the architectural detailing of the terrace: on the existing units canted bay full height projections are completed in multi-pitched roofing, whereas the proposal shows a plain shallow-pitched gable presentation for its forward element. No chimney is included for the new dwelling (ridge-spanning chimney stacks add further vertical rhythm to the terrace) and the window dressings for the proposed house indicate limited soldier course brick detail immediately above some openings, whereas bay window piers in contrasting buff brick and entrance porch recessing adds interest to the terrace. The applicant has indicated the use of a brick similar to that of the terrace, and a natural slate is specified for the roof, but no details are given for the materials, depth of reveal or finishes for doors, windows, barge boards, soffits and rainwater goods, all and any of which can have significant influence on the overall appearance of a new building.

The span, bulk and roofscape of the large Surgery building behind the site does not provide a good reference point for new development at this prominent gateway location, and any potential development of the site should instead provide an improved presentation towards the A375 and A3025 than does the rear elevation of the Surgery. The holly trees and other planting on the Council-maintained landscape strip fronting the site must not be endangered by any demolition, construction or hard-surfacing works carried out on the site, as these green elements provide an important softening effect on the appearance of this part of the settlement, particularly in relation to the bulky surgery building behind.

The plot dimensions provide enough space for parking, turning and private garden areas for new residents, and given the grain of development close to the site, the proposed orientation and footprint of the proposed dwelling within this plot is considered not to represent “town cramming”.

The council’s normal requirement for a contribution towards the provision of additional or improved public recreational space applies to this proposal, especially as the area for outdoor play within the site indicated is very limited. No arrangement has been made (i.e. no unilateral undertaking has been offered by the applicant, nor any legal agreement sought by your officers) relating to the mechanism for securing this public provision. This matter must be addressed either in a condition on any permission granted, or in a separate refusal reason, should planning permission be withheld.

While the scheme meets some of the criteria for new housing proposals, overall it has not been shown that the development would be of an acceptable standard.

Conservation Area Impact

Any development on this site, which is edged by the Conservation Area on its two open sides, would have a clear impact on the character and appearance of that Area, the special form and visual qualities of which have been designated worthy of protection. The existing built forms on the site do not contribute positively to the aesthetic value of the area, with the exception, potentially, of the stretches of rubble stone wall on the site’s boundaries. Appreciation of these elements is difficult though, because of the screening vegetation adjoining the site. However, the character and integrity of this formerly separate settlement (now subsumed within Sidmouth) is at least indicated by the existence of a mix of non-domestic land uses, within and bordering the Conservation Area boundary. The retention of the working function of this site would assist in preserving the character of the Conservation Area. Its loss would reduce the diversity of activities in Sidford, altering its character adversely.

For the reasons elaborated earlier, the design standard for the proposal is considered to fall short of that expected in this locality, when the site is read together with neighbouring property outside the Conservation Area boundaries. The proposed development does not display any affinity with or continuation of local or prevalent design themes, and would not preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area by complimenting or reinforcing architectural or townscape elements of local distinctiveness.

Neighbouring Uses Impact

The development would not damage the private residential amenities of adjoining housing, as the footprint and orientation of the proposed building within the site has been carefully selected to ensure no unacceptable intervisibility between new and existing occupiers. Traffic movements to and from a new single dwelling are not likely to be greatly different from those generated by the existing use. Although the proposed parking space for the dwelling would be located right next to the side wall of the rear garden to no.148, rather than being shielded from it by the existing narrow storage structure as is presently the case, it is considered that the proposal would not result in an increase in disturbance to adjoining residents. (It is not clear whether there is a right of way across the site from the rear garden of no. 148, which would be obstructed by a vehicle parked in the car parking space indicated on the submitted plan.) The development could, potentially, represent an improvement in residential amenity terms, as many employment uses can be viewed as sources of disturbance from noise, dust, fumes etc. (No complaints relating to operations on the site have been noted, however).

Transport and Access Matters

The proposal shows a single parking space and an on-site turning head, both of which are considered by the Highway Authority as being adequate and essential for the scheme. This is not a town centre location where it may be appropriate to allow or require no car parking provision at all, but neither is it a remote location where the maximum number of car parking

spaces (2) could/would be appropriate. An on-site turning facility must be provided as certainly no vehicle should reverse onto the A 375 from the site. (Visibility at the site access onto this main road is restricted enough for forward-moving vehicles.) There is no land indicated as being within the control of the applicant to secure better visibility at the access point, nor any opportunity to widen the drive mouth, to enable a vehicle to turn left from the site without crossing the centre of the carriageway into the path of on-coming vehicles. These are limitations currently experienced in the authorised commercial use of the site however, and the proposed development would not worsen the existing situation.

The site enjoys good pedestrian links with retail and community facilities in Sidford itself, and adequate space is available within the site for the storage of at least two cycles. Regular bus services to a number of close and longer range destinations stop on their route through Sidford, providing good links for residents to work, school, commercial, leisure and other destinations.

Sustainability

This site is considered to be appropriate for a new dwelling, as it comprises brownfield land within a built-up area well served by local services and good public transport. The loss of employment premises in the locality would, however, reduce opportunities for employment within close (walking) distance of residential accommodation, diminishing the self-sufficiency of the community.

As with any new build project this scheme represents the chance to use resource-efficient materials and construction methods, and to incorporate micro-renewable energy generating installations, to minimise its carbon footprint and most efficiently manage water resources. PPS1 also advises that good design is intrinsic to sustainable development, however, and that the re-use and upgrading of existing buildings for appropriate purposes is often less expensive in resource terms than the demolition of buildings, the disposal of the waste materials and the use of additional new materials to create new structures.

On balance, this proposal is considered not to represent a sustainable form of development.

CONCLUSION

While the proposal accords with some elements of national planning policy and the development plan, the proposed development would diminish the supply of small scale employment sites in the area, would have a detrimental impact on the visual quality of the locality, would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the adjoining Conservation Area, would not ensure adequate provision for public recreational space for which it would create additional demand, and overall would not represent a sustainable form of development.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons.

1. As a result of its form, proportions, detailing and relationship with surrounding built structures and intervening spaces, the proposed development would result in a bland and incongruous element in a prominent location within the street scene, which would neither compliment nor reinforce local architectural and townscape distinctiveness. The proposed development would neither preserve nor enhance the character, appearance or setting of the adjacent Conservation Area, and the works would therefore conflict with the terms and objectives of national and local planning policy and guidance as set out in PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS 3 – Housing, PPG 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment, policies ST1, CO6 and CO7 of the Devon Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 and policies S4, D1 and EN11 of the East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011.

2. The proposed development would result in the loss of a site and premises that provide facilities for small-scale employment opportunities in a sustainable and appropriate location. No evidence has been provided to justify the setting aside of the adopted presumption of retaining such sites and premises for employment use. The proposal would not encourage the economic well-being of the locality, nor promote the self-sufficiency of the community. The development would conflict with the terms and objectives of national and local planning policy and guidance as set out in PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development, PPG4 – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms, policies ST1, ST3 and ST20 of the Devon Structure Plan 2001 – 2016, and policies E1 and E3 of the East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011.
3. It has not been demonstrated that the proposed dwelling would represent a sustainable form of development, in that the change of use of the site would undermine the self-sufficiency of the community by the loss of employment opportunities, the design of the scheme is not of a high standard appropriate for the locality, and no details have been submitted to demonstrate efforts to minimise the environmental impact of the development in terms of its carbon footprint and effect on water resources, during its construction phase and over the lifetime of the occupation of the dwelling by:
 - a) the adoption of measures to maximise the re-use and re-cycling of materials resulting from demolition works;
 - b) the adoption of measures to minimise the distance of transportation of non-recyclable materials for safe disposal resulting from demolition works;
 - c) the incorporation into the scheme of energy and resource efficient materials, equipment, construction practices and operational practices;
 - d) the incorporation into the scheme of water management practices such as sustainable urban drainage systems (ground conditions permitting), rainwater harvesting and grey water re-use, and
 - e) the incorporation into the scheme of technology to achieve on-site renewable energy generation or heat production.
4. The occupation of the proposed development would result in additional demand in the locality for the provision of public recreational space. No mechanism has been offered to or agreed with the Local Planning Authority that would secure the provision of or an appropriate contribution towards the provision of such public recreational space. The proposed development would therefore not satisfy the criteria of the Development Plan set out in policies ST3, ST4 and CO6 of the Devon Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 and policies S7 and RE3 of the East Devon Local Plan 1995 -2011.

List of Background Papers

Application working file, including consultation responses,
DCLG publications PPS 1, PPS 3, PPG4, PPG 13, and PPG 15,
Devon Structure Plan 2001 – 2016,
East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011.