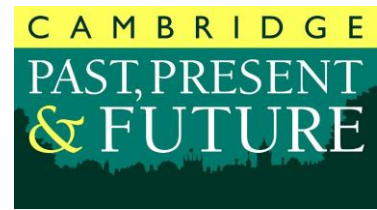


Alice Young
Cambridge City Council
Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service
Guildhall
Cambridge, CB2 3QJ



Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Wandlebury Country Park
Cambridge CB22 3AE
Phone 01223 - 243830
www.cambridgeppf.org

By email to:

planning@greatercambridgeplanning.org

Alice.Young@greatercambridgeplanning.org

18/03/2021

Dear Alice

21/00537/FUL | Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of five dwellings and associated landscaping | 29 High Street Chesterton Cambridge CB4 1NQ

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxtton Watermill.

CambridgePPF objects to this proposed development on four grounds:

- 1) It destroys a valuable and well-established tree canopy in this part of the Conservation Area and therefore does not protect or enhance the Conservation Area.
- 2) It causes substantial harm to the context of an important listed building in the Chesterton Conservation Area and, as currently configured, does not respect the principle of 'subservience' to a listed building incorporated in council policies.
- 3) By building up to the pavement and creating a hard urban corridor, it fails to recognise the substantial harm it will cause to the character of this part of Chesterton High Street.
- 4) It is contrary to some half dozen policies in the Cambridge Local Plan adopted in October 2018 (these are listed below).

1: Wholesale removal of the tree canopy: As the 2008 Conservation Area Appraisal makes clear, clumps and small glades of mature trees are an important characteristic of the Chesterton Conservation Area, not least in this particular area. Beyond their ecological advantages it remarks that trees have a generally "softening effect" on the area and contribute to its position as an interesting and mature environment.

This is no less true of 29 High Street. It is clear from the aerial view of the site that more than half the property benefits from a tree canopy (see Design and Access report). Virtually all of this canopy will be removed by

the proposed development. This is particularly unfortunate as previous developments over the years have heavily eroded the tree presence in this quarter of the Conservation Area. Indeed, the applicants themselves remark that the trees (which they intend remove) are an important aspect of this particular site serving as an amenity and contributing to the context for a range of properties adjoining them, including The Maltings, the substantial number of flats at Cambanks and the new development already agreed at no. 25-27 High Street.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment Rev A (site visit carried out on behalf of the applicants on 20/6/2019) states that “it is necessary to fell 12 individual trees, one group of trees, one area of trees, two hedgerows and a section of one further hedgerow in order to achieve the proposed layout” (see Summary). Destruction on this scale is a substantial intervention. The assessment of the maintenance work that is recommended for the trees future survival notes that most of them are in reasonable to good condition, although they may have been somewhat neglected recently. Indeed, the schedule recommends that just two of the trees will require “annual maintenance” whilst a further one should be “reduced by 50% (or felled)”. The report adds that “only one tree has been identified for removal irrespective of any development proposals” (see point 2 of the Summary).

In short, as visual inspection of the Proposed Site Layout (inc. Roof Plan) shows, only one tree of any size on the plan is scheduled for retention (see plan: “Existing tree retained as part of Unit 1 garden”). We acknowledge that some effort will be made replace some of the trees but these are all of a much smaller size and will take decades to mature The two other large trees shown on the Layout Plan are not actually located within the boundaries of the proposed development.

By way of offering some mitigation, the Design and Access statement states that “there are a number of mature trees around the boundary within neighbouring properties which benefit the site” (p.1). Sadly, this remark does not take account of planning decisions already made about felling trees on these neighbouring properties. For example, the owners of 25-27 High Street have already been given permission to remove around half of the trees on their plot (many them fine specimens in good health) in order to enable the construction of 8 residential units. When that development comes to fruition, and in tandem with the applicants’ proposals a swathe of trees will have been cleared running from the rear of the Care Home (neighbouring no. 25-27 High Street) to the car park of the Maltings. We estimate that the two developments between them will remove some two dozen mature trees, the greater proportion of them being contributed by 21/00537/FUL. By way of mitigation for this wholesale destruction of the tree canopy, it is proposed to plant just one more substantial tree (ostensibly to mask the view of Unit 3 from the Maltings car park) and a few other smaller ones to be dotted around the site.

A wide variety of trees will be cut down. These include amongst others: a Laurel, a Cypress, a Yew, a Chestnut, a Walnut, a Weeping Willow, a Sycamore, a Silver Birch and two kinds of Cedar. In addition, hedgerows will be lost.

Amongst the trees to be felled are the two in the front garden of no. 29: the Silver Birch and the Deodar Cedar. There is also a rather fine magnolia in this space as well as some lawn. The value of these specimens to the street scene is completely ignored by the planning application; they are all to be removed. They have a considerable softening effect, both on the street and on the house itself (see photos on the front page of the Heritage Statement and Plans and Elevations as existing). The earlier Tree Survey submitted by the applicants confirms both their contribution and their condition. With respect to the Silver Birch it noted: “Good form and condition. *Good public amenity*”. On the Cedar Tree it remarked: “*An attractive tree.....appears physiologically healthy*”. No justification, however, is offered for the removal of either of these two trees other than the desire on the part of the applicants to build right up to the pavement.

In sum, we note the wholesale destruction of trees and current vegetation proposed for the front third of the site (looking from the High Street). Their considerable “softening effect” will be completely lost. We

judge that their removal will neither “preserve nor enhance” a key characteristic of the Conservation Area, namely its status, as the Conservation Area Appraisal puts it, as “an interesting and mature environment”.

2: Impact on the context of a listed building: 25-27 High Street Chesterton is the main heritage asset affected by this proposal. It is a handsome Georgian mansion with a Grade II listing that, sadly, has been allowed to fall into disrepair. The 2008 Conservation Area Appraisal remarks: “Further west on the north side of the road is the Grade II listed No. 25-27 High Street. 18C, altered and north wing added in 19C. Street front is of 18C brown brick to top of first floor window arches; the rest is of 19C gault brick. Two storeys and attics. Front was originally symmetrical of 5 bays with a central doorway. Second doorway inserted when house divided into two tenements. No. 27 was the Bowling Green public house”. Given its proportions and historic origins it rightly deserves its Grade II listing.

Fortunately, recently-granted permissions will restore it to its former glory with a particular emphasis on the character of its street frontage (18/1703/FUL). Entering the High Street from the West it is the first major building to catch one’s eye and helps to establish the visitor’s awareness that they are entering an area of historic interest. Equally, travelling along the High Street from the East, it is the last building on the right of historic significance. In short, it deserves its Grade II listing and, given its singular contribution to this part of the Conservation Area, every effort should be made to enhance its setting. The applicants’ proposals will not achieve this ambition.

We have several concerns:

- a) The applicants claim that their proposed Units 1 and 2 respect their listed neighbour, no. 25-27, and are “subservient” to it. We are at a loss to understand how they can have reached this conclusion. As is shown clearly in Plans, Sections and Elevations, the two units form a very substantial whole which encroaches considerably on the status and presence of no. 25-27. They are of the same height, closer to no. 25-27 than the present house (just a narrow alleyway will now separate them), and they remove a hedgerow which currently serves as a kind of buffer.
- b) The current alignment of 29 High Street (which it is proposed to demolish) is protected from the pavement by a front garden. We believe that when no. 29 was built it was placed on its plot with a clear eye to its relationship to the neighbouring properties; it was deliberately set back so it was less intrusive. This decision allows the qualities of 25-27 High Street to be more easily appreciated regardless of which direction one is walking along the High Street. By creating two new dwellings immediately on the street frontage, with little space between them and completely removing the view of the east façade of no. 25-27 this context will be destroyed.

In sum, by failing to respect the well-established principles of “subservience” in several respects we judge this to be “substantial harm” to the context of a listed building.

3: Impact on the nature of the High Street: 29 High Street is located very close to the junction of the High Street with Church Street – this junction is one of two or three significant open spaces in the Conservation Area helping to define its character; historic Chesterton House is on the opposite corner. Between them they make important contributions to the Conservation Area and the views associated with it. Looking eastwards along the High Street one also sees a number of other, mostly terraced houses of varying ages which include Buildings of Local Interest at 40-46 High Street and The Maltings at no.41. In short, this is an area of considerable significance to the character of the Conservation Area and any new developments should be undertaken with considerable care.

The current proposal ignores these characteristics in two respects:

c) By building almost up to the pavement it creates a completely different street frontage to that which exists at present, causing further damage to the Conservation Area.

d) By changing the street scene on the northern side of the High Street into a much more strongly defined 'urban corridor' with no relieving green space.

In sum, we believe that Units 1 and 2, by failing to respect the well-established principle of "subservience" to a neighbouring listed building, cause 'substantial harm' to its setting and more generally, by introducing new elements into the street scene and frontage, neither "preserve nor enhance" the Conservation Area.

5: Contrary to policies adopted in the Cambridge Local Plan: The proposal does not satisfactorily demonstrate why the detailed sections of the guidance offered in the plan should be ignored. The relevant policies are outlined below:

- Protecting garden land & the subdivision of existing dwelling plots (p173) Policy 52 (a-e).
- Protecting and enhancing the character of Cambridge (p181) Policy 55 (a) & (c). Responding to context.
- Designing new buildings (p183) Policy 57 (a).
- Designing landscape and the public realm (p185) Policy 59 (a) and (b).
- Conservation & enhancement of Cambridge's historic environment (p189) Policy 61 (a-e).
- Trees (p206) Policy 71 (a), (b) and (c).

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely



James Littlewood

Chief Executive