



By Online Planning Register

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

01/06/2022

Dear Amy

Response to 22/01432/FUL: Part demolition of the existing Romsey Labour Club building with retention of the BLI historic frontage and erection of 43no serviced apartment development (sui generis use) along with a cafe,, gymnasium, community space, and associated infrastructure and landscaping. Romsey Labour Club Mill Road Cambridge

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.

CPPF have responded to previous applications, and we do not consider that this revised application overcomes our objections.

We object to this application for the following reasons:-

1. Loss of Building of Local Interest, leaving only the facades with no evidence that the rest of the building is of equal interest and how the development could incorporate it.
2. Detrimental impact on the conservation area.
3. Over development of the site.

The applicant proposes a facade-retention scheme of the Mill Road and Coleridge Road facades of the Romsey Labour Club, a non-designated heritage asset, that contributes to the character of the Mill Road Area Conservation Area. Para 203 of the NPPF states, 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application'. Policy 62 of the Local Plan seeks to retain Local Heritage Assets and balance any harm against the significance of the asset. The historical importance of this building is described in the Conservation Area Appraisal *'the new Labour Party Clubhouse in Mill Road, ... was opened by Ramsey Macdonald in 1928. When many of the residents supported the General Strike in 1926, the area became famous for its strong union membership and socialist leanings, and was often referred to as 'Red Romsey'. Whilst it lay close to the City Centre, it felt quite isolated from the University buildings, dons and students, with the line of the railway quite literally creating a barrier'*. This application does not demonstrate that the interior spaces of the building lack significance or that they cannot be incorporated into the proposed scheme. It is considered that the demolition of the majority of the building would cause a substantial loss of significance contrary to Policy 62 on Local Heritage Assets.

The demolition of the Labour Club will also lead to visual harm to the street scene and conservation area as a result of the additional scale and mass of the new build, which is providing an additional 8 units over the previous permission. Policy 61 (Conservation and enhancement of Cambridge's historic environment) requires development to be of an appropriate scale, form and height etc. The retention of the building's external elevations is a token gesture that fails to adequately address the problems of the proposal. The new build is considered out of scale and diminishes the quality and significance of the asset to the Conservation Area.

The previous application was for 44 serviced apartments with a prior application for 39 flats. It appears that this was amended to 36 flats to reflect revised plans and Design and Access Statement (see Amendment/Debrief sheet to committee 24 April 2019). The reduction in the number of units was to ensure the proposal was compliant with policy 57 (Design of new buildings). This current application increases the number of flats to 43, representing a decrease of one apartment from the previous application (21/04559). This is considered to be over development of the site, with the resultant bulk of the new building being overbearing in the conservation area. The overall size of the flats remains a concern, as well as accessibility requirements. If fewer units were proposed, then the remaining ones could become larger and more attractive. This could also go to reduce some of the bulk and height of the proposed new building.

However, if the officer is minded to support this application, we would like to make the following detailed comments.

1. The treatment of the existing historic facade is considered poor. In particular, not re-opening up the bay window on the Mill Road elevation and retaining its blank appearance is missing an opportunity to enhance the appearance of the building.

2. The proposed design of the upper floors to Mill Road and Coleridge Road does not relate to the historic building. The application states that "The fenestration pattern is both regular and aligned responding to Victorian Terrace Designs of surrounding properties". However, this building is particularly notable as an exception to the Victorian terrace design that is typical in the surrounding area, and therefore the comparison is moot. The proposed design will detract from the significance of the existing historic building.

3. Community Space

The cafe still lacks a kitchen and back of house space for stock, storage and refuse. It is unclear how it is supposed to function.

4. External and amenity space

We are still concerned by the lack of parking and disabled parking in particular. The assumption that one can park within the neighbourhood will result in harm to the adjacent streets and residents.

We understand that some form of development is likely to take place on this site. However, we do not feel the current proposal demonstrates the best and final option. We should all demand more from new developments in quality, design and enhancements.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer