



By Online Planning Register

Cambridge Past, Present & Future  
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27/12/2023

Dear Phoebe

**Response to 23/04537/FUL: First and second floor extension above the existing ground floor commercial Business and Service premises to create 15 residential apartments.**

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.

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Cambridge Past, Present and Future consider that the height of the development will have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area and adjacent Listed Building contrary to Local and Neighbourhood Plan Policies.

The site lies within the Histon and Impington Conservation Area but regrettably there is no Conservation Area Appraisal to help evaluate the impact of this development. Opposite the site, The Gables (listed), The Red Lion and St Andrews Centre help tell the history of this part of Histon.

Adopted Local Plan policy NH/14 requires development to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

The made Histon and Impington Neighbourhood Plan (May 2021) identifies priorities and principles for the development of the villages. Key Priority 1 is to maintain the village character which includes the visual elements of green spaces, village pubs, local shops, and medieval churches, and principle 4 centres on Heritage and Design.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy HIM07, which deals specifically with the School Hill Site, supports the provision of residential development above ground floor level. The policy identifies a number of criteria to which development should adhere to. The supporting text in paragraph 5.96 states that proposals to add a *second floor* (my emphasis) of residential flats will be supported.

The Histon and Impington Village Design Guide (Draft 2019) requires development in the High Street and School Hill area to respect the character of the Conservation Area, especially in terms of building height, massing and materials. Building height along the street should generally be limited to that of the surrounding

buildings (2 storeys) although 3 storey development may be acceptable set back from the road frontage. (Design Guidance 7.1a and 7.3a)

The character of School Hill is of single and two storey dwellings. The commercial buildings on the site are single storey and set back from the road. There are a number of trees in the foreground and trees to the rear of the site are visible over the flat roof. This creates a space with a very open character where the sky dominates rather than tall buildings.

The proposal is introducing an additional two and half storeys. The Design and Access Statement considers that this relates well to the existing context of the street scene. The site section in 4.3 page 16 illustrates the emerging design of the proposed development against the adjoining buildings and suggests that the height relates well to the 2.5 storey retirement home to the rear. However, we consider that the proposal is introducing development which is out of context to the street scene. The existing street scene is of 1-2 storeys with trees visible above the roof tops. We do not consider that the retirement home to the rear of the site is visible from School Hill. The proposal will therefore not be seen against this building but introduce a dominant and inappropriate scale of development. In addition, the proposed development will dominate over School Hill Gardens, whose amenity is protected by Policy HIM10, and over the heritage assets opposite.

The introduction of an additional 2.5 storeys above the ground floor is therefore not sympathetic to the existing character of the Conservation Area contrary to Policy NH/14 and HIM07. We consider that an additional 1-1.5 storeys are more appropriate to the conservation area setting and adheres more to the intention of Policy HIM07, and therefore a revised proposal should be negotiated.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

*Sarah Nicholas*

Principal Planning Officer