

Application 09/4335M, Construction of 4 No. dwellings at Cumberland Drive, Bollington.

This comment is provided on behalf of Bollington Civic Society ...

This application is essentially a resubmission of the lower part of a previous larger application that was unanimously rejected by Macclesfield Borough Council Planning Committee and the subsequent appeal disallowed by the inspector.

There seem to be no changes made since the previous application considered in 2009 (08/2751P), other than a minor change to the parking layout, so Bollington Civic Society continue to very strongly object to this proposal. It fails the test on many grounds, in particular suitability and effect on the Conservation Area.

No doubt as a result of the rejection of their case by the inspector after the inquiry into their previous application, the applicant has divided off a section of their land for consideration in this application. It would seem probable that they will in due course submit an application to develop the remaining piece of this land. However, the two pieces are both significant in the context of the Conservation Areas and should be planned and considered as a whole. This is the fifth subdivision of the applicant's land in this area and the resulting estate and its effect on the Conservation Area has, in our view, been significantly detrimental as a result.

In view of the sensitivity of this site, its complex levels and gradients, and the considerable opposition amongst the local residents to the proposals, Bollington Civic Society considers it an essential pre-requisite to a decision that the planning committee should make a site visit. Some members may have taken part in the visit made by the previous committee in early 2009 but subsequent changes to the planning committee in April 2009 means that some may not have seen the site.

A resident has prepared an artist's impression of what the proposed houses would look like viewed from Lord Street just below the entrance to Cumberland Drive.



The site is in Bollington Conservation Area, together with Lord Street from number 50 down (the house beside the pedestrian in the picture above). The cottages in Chancery Lane and the top two properties in Lord Street together with the Red Lion Inn are in Kerridge Conservation Area. Any new development must comply with MBC planning guidelines and also with the Bollington Supplementary Planning Guidance in order to fit in with the existing properties. Our major objections are based on concerns in this respect.

AAA. It is our opinion that the proposal does not comply with the Bollington Supplementary Planning Guidance in respect of paragraphs 3 and 8 of that document. We quote and then discuss each in turn ...

3. The overall scale, density, height, mass and materials of new development must normally be sympathetic to the character of the local environment, street scene, adjoining buildings and the site itself (Policy DC1). Any housing development in Bollington shall be in keeping with immediate surrounding area and shall normally be at a density of between 30-50 dwellings per hectare net, subject to the provisions of Policy H3. Within and adjoining Bollington's Conservation Areas development will only be permitted if it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Areas. All development in Bollington should reflect local character and respect form, layout, siting, scale and design of surrounding buildings and their setting.

Reason

Bollington contains four Conservation Areas and many properties that are subject to Article 4 Directions, which includes those adjacent to the site in Chancery Lane and Lord Street. It will be important to ensure that any new development makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Areas and reflects local character.

The proposed structure is too big, in particular too high at the Lord Street end, and of too great a mass to fit in properly with the neighbouring cottages and will visually dominate them thus destroying the present wonderful visual balance of that area. A development of such modern houses would make no positive contribution to the Conservation Area and does not reflect in any way the local character.

Bollington and Kerridge Conservation Area Appraisal notes that '*most of the buildings along Lord Street are shown ... as being buildings of townscape merit*'. Adshead Barn Farm is particularly important in this landscape.

The proposal introduces houses where there were no such buildings previously. This changes the views of the area as well as the views from across the valley of the River Dean and Harrop Brook. Such a high building will be detrimental to this corner of both the Bollington and Kerridge Conservation Areas.

The proposed houses are located at the high end of Cumberland Drive at the very point where height should be reduced but the final three dwellings are three storeys in height. All four are based above road level towering above the existing properties across Cumberland Drive making them look completely out of scale.

If the site is to be developed then the roof line of the houses should be sited closer to the level of the wall along Chancery Lane. The existing open views from the surrounding lanes must be preserved. Any houses built on this site should be linked to those in Deanway and be sited to effect that link conceptually and visually, that is, sited lower down the hill, and set back into the hillside. However, because of the more open position on the hill development should be restricted to two storeys in height.

8. Only development which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of Bollington's Conservation Areas will be allowed in or adjoining the Conservation Areas. Any highway works and the provision of street furniture should seek to be in keeping with the Conservation Area, particularly with regard to quality of design and materials.

Reason

Bollington contains four Conservation Areas and a number of properties that are subject to Article 4 Directions. It will be important to ensure that any new development makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Areas and reflects local character.

It is our opinion that three storey housing in this open area is not likely to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Areas and certainly does not reflect local character.

BBB. Attention should be drawn to the Bollington and Kerridge Conservation Area Character Appraisal. In particular new development should ...

- Respect its context in terms of scale, height and massing;

- Development should respect the views across the valleys of the River Dean and Harrop Brook.

The proposed structure achieves neither of these requirements, being large in scale. Being greater than two storeys in height at these properties would obstruct the views across the valley and from the other side of the valley.

CCC. The units are proposed to be built on the presently unused car park immediately to the left on entry to Cumberland Drive. This car park seems to have been provided as part of a planning permission to build the original houses in Cumberland Drive (application number 43568P, in 1985/86) in order that there were an appropriate number of parking spaces for those houses. However, the developer, the same H Cumberbirch & Sons, has steadfastly avoided its intended use by local residents. It is recognised that fully utilising this car park would largely resolve the existing car parking problems in the area. If this car park is to be built over then provision for a similar number of parking places should be made elsewhere on the applicant's land in the area and should be required to be made available for free use by the public.

DDD. We would draw your attention to Development Control DC38. This sets out guidance with respect to the distance between existing and new properties in various circumstances. There are a number of instances in the proposal which do not comply with this guidance:

- The units are very close to the existing properties in Cumberland Drive. Unit 2 is about 23m from 1 Cumberland Drive where DC38 Table 4 suggests 28m plus an additional 6m to allow for height difference, 34m in total;
- Unit 1 is very close to 50 Lord Street; being three storeys, its roof line is said to be 87cm below the elevated existing property but is only 10m distant; Table 4 says it should be 19m.

While it may not be appropriate for DC38 Table 4 to be applied in every case we do believe that a development should come somewhat nearer the guidelines than does the present proposal. The fact that the proposed buildings come so close to existing premises is a further indication of the over-development, and the unneighbourly nature, of this proposal.

EEE. The applicant's Sustainability Check List fails to provide a satisfactory answer to the question regarding 'efficient use of resources, incorporation of energy saving devices' and also states that no sustainability audit has been carried out. In these days of energy conservation we would suggest that a considered answer to this question be essential for this type of development.

We find it regrettable that the council's Conservation Officer has found himself unable to oppose this application. He has been a supporter of the Bollington and Kerridge Conservation Areas and spoke eloquently in their defense at the planning inquiry into the previous application for this site. We also recognise him to be a strong supporter of the Bollington Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Bollington Civic Society finds this proposal unsupportable in its present design and urges the planning committee to reject it.

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