

LOOE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION MEETING

held in the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, East Looe on
Monday 14th December 2009 at 7pm

REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENT

Chairman – Cllr K Smith
Cllrs E B Galipeau, J Hoskin, M Joy, A Toms
and D Welch

OFFICERS

Town Clerk – Mrs Anne Frith

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr B Martin - Applicant
Mr G Parry - Applicant
Sian Cornish – Situate Planning Consultants
John Pearson – Byeways & Highways
Charles Griffiths - Architect
Neil Wall – Architect
Tim Price – Tretac
Mr J Warne – Pendrim Road Residents Association
Mr A Longman – Restormel Road Residents Association

The Chairman opened the meeting by explaining that the consultants on behalf of the prospective applicants will explain what the development proposals are and the residents will then be given the opportunity to express their views and concerns. He also pointed out that Looe Town Council are consultees in any planning application and that Cornwall Council make the decisions.

Sian Cornish explained that the proposal is for two dwellings to be built on the land adjacent to “Glendower” and Dawes Lane. This land is on the edge of the Conservation Area and is subject to Policy EV6 of the Caradon Local Plan – Open Area of Local Significance.

Mr Griffiths and Mr Wall explained that this is a difficult site for development, there are access issues and the area is of local significance but the proposal is to sympathetically develop and the end result will not impact on the area.

Pictures of the proposed development were shown to all present. Some of the trees on the site have had Tree Preservation Orders put on them.

Mr Pearson stated that he has had discussions with Tim Randalls of County Highways regarding parking provision and a turning circle.

Mr Price gave his report of the woodland management of the land (see attached Appendix ‘A’)

The Chairman then invited Mr Warne to speak on behalf of the Pendrim Road residents.

Mr Warne raised various issues (see attached Appendix 'B') the main one of which were as follows:

- .1 The land is designated as an Open Area of Local Significance.
- .2 Caradon District Council informed them that the land could not be developed.
- .3 The land was sold and bought as amenity land.

In his opinion any development would be in contradiction to Cornwall Council (Caradon District Council's) own policies.

Other points raised by Mr Warne were:

- .1 Development would seriously damage the copse and woodland.
- .2 No development is possible without major impact.
- .3 No vehicular access is possible.
- .4 Drainage and surface water will be a problem because of natural springs and rock formation and any disturbance of the land could cause problems.

Mr Warne made the point that the residents feel outraged at the way this has been handled so far.

Mr Longman endorsed the concerns raised by Mr Warne and stated that the natural succession of the woodland area had already been damaged due to some clearance of the site having already taken place before Cornwall Council took enforcement action.

Mr Pearson informed the meeting that a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be put in place to restrict the times the construction vehicles can use the roads and gave assurances that any damage to roads will be repaired.

The Chairman requested that a Construction Traffic Management Plan be brought to another meeting before any planning application is submitted as there are numerous concerns to be addressed.

Councillor Toms stated that any Construction Traffic Management Plan put in place must be legally binding, nothing else will do and negotiations must be done with the residents.

Mr Martin stated that he would be willing to put up a bond to cover the costs of any damage to Pendrim Road and North Road and also stated that he is just asking for fair treatment.

The Chairman summed up by asking the residents to keep Looe Town Council informed and asked that any letters of objection be copied to Looe Town Council if and when an application is submitted.

It was agreed that another meeting is required once further investigations into the various issues raised have been carried out.

The Meeting closed at 8.35pm.

APPENDIX 'A'

Timothy Price. Tretec Ltd. Statement for Looe Town Council

Tim Price,

I have thirty five years experience of woodland management and have run my own consultancy practice since 1981.

The proposal is to build two houses, one to the eastern end and one to the western. Access to the site will be via Dawes Lane.

After positive pre-application consultations with Matthew Odgers, the County Forester, a woody vegetation survey has now been carried out on the site.

The location of the houses has shown the intention to retain as much good vegetation as possible.

Retained trees can be protected during the construction phase with a temporary fence as described in British Standard 5837 "Trees in relation to construction" The area enclosed by the fence is the self explanatory "construction exclusion zone".

The site is the subject of a Woodland Tree Preservation Order placed in June 2009, although in reality there are very few items of woody vegetation here that one would "ordinarily call a tree".

The principal species on site is Hazel.

This shrub is the basis of screening the site and also providing a screen between the two plots.

There is a substantial native Oak in the south eastern corner of the site, and this is associated with some smaller Oaks.

However, on the whole the woodland dynamic would be described as an "unfavourable succession".

Hazel is successful here but unfortunately without intervention it will be replaced by Sycamores.

These Sycamores will never form proper trees due to the ravages of grey squirrels. This is already evident.

Past experience also leads to the conclusion that Elm saplings growing on site will soon succumb to Dutch Elm disease.

It is the owner's intention to limit the amount of land that will become domestic curtilage in order that the remainder can be managed positively for the improvement of existing and to be planted trees.

The site is approximately 5000sq.metres of which 2000 will become domestic curtilage, the remaining 3000 will be managed as woodland.

A walk over survey has indicated that apart from grey squirrels there is very little wildlife activity on the site although the lack of activity cannot all be attributed to squirrels, it is most likely that domestic cats also discourage songbirds etc.

There is also evidence of antisocial activities.

The owners of the site have commissioned a phase 1 habitat survey in order to identify the wildlife species that may be here, for example, it is known that Dormice associate with Hazel and Honeysuckle , there is very little Honeysuckle and no immediately visible evidence of dormice, however if they are here the ecologists will find them.

A comprehensive woodland management plan will be conditioned by the local planning authority.

It is intended to plan Cornwall's native sessile oak and possibly some scarlet oaks in the north eastern corner.

Hazel will be used to fill any existing gaps in the screen.

Scots pine will be planted on the western edge of the site

The south western area will again be planted with a Sessile oak - Hazel mix

This development proposal will release funds to bring this area into positive management for the first time and will give a long term visual benefit for everyone.

Timothy Price. M.Arbor.A. HND.MRAC. Tech Cert Arbor.

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JOHN WARNE SPEAKING NOTES
PRE-PLANNING MEETING MONDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2009

1. John Warne speaking in a personal and collective capacity. Owner of Glendower the adjacent property but also speaking on behalf of the Pendrim Road Committee, in the absence of its Chairman. Others are in attendance who may not fall within any group.

2. We are grateful for the opportunity to hear the proposals and to express our views.

3. It is important first to rewind from what we have heard to two major points of principle which underpin our objections.

(i) Firstly, the land is designated as an Open Area of Local Significance (OALS). In that respect it has the same designation as areas like the Wooldown and Kilminorth Woods and is not for development. Any development in these areas would be the thin end of a very large wedge, not only for this site but for Looe.

A key point here is that people seeking information from the then Caradon Council about the land were told that as an OALS it could not be developed. This is a point that should not be lost sight of.

(ii) Secondly, the land was sold as amenity land and bought as such. Clearly land for building would be much more expensive. It is wrong to provide back door entry to development in this way.

4. So any development on this land would be in conflict with these two points of principle and please note a direct contradiction of Caradon's (now Cornwall's) very own policy and advice.

5. Without derogating from these objections of principle it is necessary to address some of the points arising from the presentation. This is the first time any of us have heard any detail at all – so may well need to expand on this at a later date. For the present I confine myself to three critical points of concern.

(a) development would mean the loss of an attractive area of copse and woodland greatly valued by the community. It abuts directly onto a conservation area. We are not talking about only visual damage and loss of amenity. There are considerations such as damage to extensive and varied wildlife, too

Some damage to the site has occurred already because of the premature action of the applicants. That there was not even more damage is thanks to the timely intervention of the Council. After initial attempts to clear the land the Council imposed a Tree Preservation Order. And subsequently when the applicants entered the land with mechanical equipment a lot of damage was done but it was brought to an end by the intervention of an enforcement officer. We strongly believe that no development is possible without a massive negative impact on the area.

(b) Another major issue would be access. There are a number of dimensions to this.

There is no vehicular access. The assumed point of access is in fact land over which there exist long established parking rights. That area is already reduced because of the work of the digger, but the rights remain.

In any event, access by lorry would be extremely difficult and potentially very dangerous. This is not fanciful. It is borne of the bitter experience of the development of five houses known as Pendrim Park and other properties in Elm Tree Road. All this has resulted in extensive damage to the road itself, to adjacent properties and to individuals through accidents – to a motor cyclist and pedestrians. Pendrim Road is a main route to school. There is no refuge for parents with buggies and for elderly people.

Reassurances in various forms are always on offer but experience shows that they do not work and are legally unenforceable, especially following bankruptcy or change of ownership.

(c) The third and last point – problems of drainage and surface water. There is a history of planning applications for this site in the 1970s and 80s. These concerns were shown to be major issues for the Council itself before permission was finally refused. Because of rock formation and natural springs there is a lot of water to be absorbed. Already much water flows onto our land down onto Dawes Lane and onto the properties below. Recent years have seen landslides in the area. Any disturbance of this land will cause a reduction of its capacity for natural absorption and any increase in surface water can only add to problems.

Conclusion

Thank you to Looe Town Council again for the opportunity to put our concerns to you. I hope that you will take them into your consideration. I have tried to speak briefly and in a measured way. This should not however, disguise the sense of outrage felt about the proposals for development and the way in which it has been handled. For our part, we will continue to oppose the plans in the interests of those immediately affected and the interests of Looe more generally.