

Report from the Environmental & Planning Group of the Hadleigh Society concerning
PLANNING APPLICATION B/16/00760 submitted on 25 July & 1 August 2016

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Hadleigh Society, whose objectives are:- *“to protect and enhance Hadleigh’s heritage and environment by supporting and promoting high standards in planning, conservation, regeneration and development of features deemed to be of historical or environmental significance in the town.”*

Having studied the amended application The Society again wishes to lodge several objections to the proposed development. The Society submitted earlier comments responding to the initial proposal which should be read in conjunction with these additional notes.

1.The layout of buildings, street pattern and design remain totally out of keeping with the urban grain and character of the Conservation Area. The layout is “any-town suburban” with the bungalows failing to reflect the form and appearance of High Street properties, as purported.

2 The apartment block

The position of the Apartment building remains a very major issue being too close to the southern boundary and the historical centre of the town. Its proposed location threatens the future of the adjoining tree screen and compromises the setting of important listed buildings

It is noted that the amended scheme has removed six of the seven false oast house stacks, the building now appears a poor nondescript form of warehouse that has no particular relevance to its historic context, the site’s former use or the town centre; nor does it appear a particularly appealing place in which to live.

The bulk of the building is out of scale with its surroundings.

The applicants claim (page19) of the D.A.S. that *“The footprint of the larger Retirement Living building can also be seen to be similar in scale to other larger scale building footprints elsewhere across Hadleigh;”* the footprint and bulk of the building is two to three times that of St Mary’s Church.

The orientation and aspect of the Building is such that most of the future residents will be subject to poor daylight and/or sunlight and/or outlook: the south and west facing units will be in constant shade and nuisance from the nearby trees, which will also adversely affect the enjoyment of the communal garden and lounge; the east facing units will overlook a ‘sea’ of communal parking with spaces within 1 metre of the ground floor windows, and the remainder face north.

The applicants claim in page 36 that *“The site is relatively flat and offers the best chance for all dwellings to have beneficial orientation. The majority of dwellings are dual aspect with a traditional front and back elevations.”* This is again disputed as the apartments are single aspect and poorly orientated; this represents 54% of all dwellings.

As suggested in the Hadleigh Society initial response, **re-siting the building to the north end of the site** (possibly even three storey with a very low pitch roof) **could provide a less dominant mass. Careful orientation to maximize the views could also provide a better environment for elderly residents;** who might also appreciate balconies.

3.Lack of Social Housing, & housing for families and singles who would also greatly benefit from a town centre location. The failure to provide such accommodation appears to run counter to both national and local planning policy; the addition of several offices and/or studios could enhance employment opportunities. The density could be improved to make such provision instead of the use of “inefficient” footprints so typical of bungalows. At minimum, the development should include the number of affordable units as specified by the District Council.

4 The loss of up to 10 on-street parking spaces at the new road access will adversely affect the amenity of local High Street residents, and, equally importantly, prejudice the many businesses located in that part of the High Street. Will replacement parking spaces be made available?

5. The proposed bridge, public open space and protection of endangered species.

None of these elements has sufficient design or relevant information provided for the application to be determined, also have the benefits and disadvantages to the town and to local residents of a bridge in this location been fully evaluated? A managed wild life site, accessed through the development could offer an attractive area for residents, their families and friends. (see appendix notes).

6. There is also the renewed **risk of flooding** as assessed by the detailed Flood Reports released on 23 August 2016 which may require further consideration to be given to the height of the ground floor levels.

In conclusion, the Society is disappointed that it has felt it necessary to object to the scheme submitted by a long established local architectural practice on behalf of a national developer, but for the reasons set out above it is not considered that the scheme merits an approval for such an important site in the heart of this historic town.

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and on this site the Council ought to seek to optimise the site's potential to accommodate, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses, to respond to local character and history, to reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, to safeguard the natural environment and create a safe, accessible and pleasant place in which to live.

Appendices

A Lack of any details for a footbridge over the River Brett is most concerning as it lies within a Conservation Area, an Area of Special Landscape Value and a **County Wildlife Site**. The site of the footbridge and the Riverside Walk to which it is proposed to connect was flooded in early June this year. The applicants propose (see page 28 of the DAS) "A new timber footbridge will be provided, the exact design and specification of which is to be agreed between the Landscape Architect, Babergh District Council and the Environment Agency (in respect of the flood zone requirements). This is wholly unacceptable, the river is at least 10 metres wide and the bridge will need to be about 15 metres in total width taking in to account the bank abutments. To determine the construction, design and appearance of a major structure as a discharge of a planning condition runs contrary to public consultation, proper consideration and expected method of determination of such matters in a full application set within in a designated heritage asset area. Is the bridge single span, or on piers driven in to river bed, is it horizontal or to be "arched" or "suspended", what height above the normal river level will it be, how accessed - steps or ramps for disabled, what impact upon river flow or bank integrity, an most importantly how does it affect flood risk as well as damage to protected specie habitants found on the site? When is it to be built, before development starts, before occupation of the dwellings or sometime never?

B .Lack of integration of proposed open space within development results from the housing "turning its back" to the open space with 2 metre high fencing separating the apartment block and bungalows from the open space. On page 36 of the DAS it states ".....and ensuring that the new buildings provide adequate surveillance over both private and public areas." This is disputed as the open space will not be overlooked directly by any apartment or bungalow which may lend the space to attract anti-social behaviour, particularly as it is not lit and the main footpath leading to and from the space from the south appears to be via a long, narrow and fenced walkway; that could lend itself to creating an intimidating environment.

C. Failure to have full regard to protecting endangered species inhabiting the open space area, in that the full reptile and other ecological studies appear to have been completed late in the design process, and one even after submission of the application. Such that whilst the amendments have tried to deal with this matter, it appears the creation of the area for unlimited public open space may have clear negative effects upon the indigenous flora and fauna. If known earlier, the space could have been (and could still be) designed as a carefully managed wildlife area (perhaps in partnership with a wildlife charity such as the Suffolk Wildlife Trust) rather than an area completely open to public access.