

Planning Application PL/24/0900

Proposed Works The construction of 5 no 3-bedroom town houses to land adjacent to 24 George Street.

Site address LAND ADJACENT TO 24 GEORGE STREET, GEORGE STREET, CAVERSHAM, READING

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1. CADRA objects to the above application in its present form and raises the following concerns.

2. Location

This is a very prominent site which, in addition the advertising boards, was until recently well planted with trees. The green space in front gave an open feel, lying as it does on the edge of a densely populated area, with little tree cover. The felling of trees, both authorised and unauthorised, the subsequent hoarding and general mess have raised substantial concern in the local community.

This an opportunity to provide a much-needed green space in a heavily congested built-up area and improve its connection to the river scene.

It is important that any future use of the site retains an open feel and adds, not detracts, to the visual amenity of the area surrounding prominent site.

3. Architectural Impact and Caversham's 'streetscapes'

The site is at the centre of a busy but well-preserved and remarkably complete area of Caversham that consists of terraced housing displaying great consistency in terms of period, scale and building materials, all of which need to be respected in any future planning applications. Despite some encroachments, the materials used are red and Reading silver grey brick (a specialty of this part of the world) with details in cream brick. The most architecturally significant example is on Gosbrook Road, directly facing the proposed site, with its block of grey and cream terraced houses. There are several excellent examples of modern infill building nearby which respects this architectural and design heritage, notably around the Waitrose site and on Gosbrook Road near the listed Baptist Church by Alfred Waterhouse. It is the completeness and satisfying unity of the streetscapes – particularly in Lower Caversham – which are becoming an all-too-rare feature of modern towns, and this needs to be respected and preserved, just as an individual building of merit would be protected through listing.

4. Flooding

Contrary to what is indicated in the application, this area has flooded in recent years. The flood risk in Lower Caversham is well known and well documented. In laymen's terms, this is best described as the danger that, in the event of flood, Christchurch Meadows fills to capacity and overflows on to Gosbrook Road and beyond. There have been some near

misses recently and minor changes could have serious consequences. Against this background, both the Sequential Test and the safe exit route described are unconvincing.

The application proposes voids under the houses to replace flood storage lost with the extensive increase in hard standing. Monitoring of voids to ensure that they remain clear and free flowing is notoriously hard to control and they are not viewed as effective.

There is clear evidence that the frequency of flooding will only increase, exposing the occupiers to unnecessary risk and costs.

Flooding all around the area in 1947 is well documented and numerous photographs are shown in the attached. Flooding of Christchurch Meadows near to capacity is now a regular event. Although 1947 was an exceptional event, it demonstrates the wider risk should flood water from Christchurch Meadows overflow on to Gosbrook Road and beyond.

5. Landscaping and trees

The lack of any detail on landscaping and planting is disappointing and surprising given the background on the TPO trees. One part of the application mentions fastigate beech trees and another a mix of trees with no supporting details. The only statement made is: *Soft landscaping proposed within the front gardens & to the northern corner of the site on the Gosbrook/George Street Junction.*

Landscaping and tree planting are key to the location, the flooding issues and the difficult issues over the TPO trees, so this is a major omission.

6. Ecology and Biodiversity

Properly landscaped and planted this area could provide important ecological benefits and a biodiverse environment.

7. Car free development

While the general principle of car free developments is well established in areas with good public transport and pedestrian access to services, this application raises several issues. Sited on a key junction, liable to congestion, delivery, drop off and taxis will all pose problems with vehicles stopping without permission blocking free traffic flow. There is no bay provided for deliveries. If there were, it is not clear how vehicles would safely enter and exit that area on the junction.

Typically, many residents of car free developments try to find ways of having a car locally and this would add to the substantial pressure on parking in nearby streets where parking restrictions still permit some use by non-residents.

8. Living Conditions

The Planning Statement offers the dwellings as much needed family homes. However, traffic noise, pollution levels and flood risk severely compromise their suitability. Similarly, those with mobility issues would find it hard to make their homes there.

9. Refuse Collection

Details of the proposed bin storage are inadequate. From the number of bins involved, there is a severe risk of pavement blocking at a critical point.

10. Impact on neighbours

As acknowledged in the application, the 45` sight line is breached.

11. Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, CADRA objects to this application, which is very disappointing in its level of detail for such a prominent site.

CADRA 16 October 2024

Appendix with Photographs of 1947 Flood

George
St



George
St



Gosbroo
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Gosbrook Rd and George St junction



Gosbrook Rd



