

01st December 2023

Delivered by email

Mr Howard Smith
Planning Services
Exeter City Council
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MCLA3001

Dear Mr Smith

LAND AT SUMMERLAND STREET, EXETER – FULL PLANNING APPLICATION (REF. 23/0490/FUL)

Further to our ongoing discussions in respect of the above application and specifically your email of 13th November 2023. We have provided further commentary on each of the issues raised in your email below and enclosed additional documents where relevant.

Ground Floor Layout

You have commented that the revised Ground Floor layout is considered to be successful, but that there is concern about the inclusion of two studio units at ground floor level with frontage onto Red Lion Lane.

As noted throughout the resubmission that has been made, the scheme changes have sought to address previous concerns raised by the Council about the overall height and scale of the proposed development, which has now been reduced. This reduction in scale has had knock on impacts for the balance of private living and communal amenity space within the building, and where a successful balance needs to be found to ensure viability and the optimum use of the land for the provision of new homes. Two studio units are (as identified) now provided at ground floor level adjacent to the Red Lion Lane frontage.

The Red Lion Lane frontage is not a main or busy thoroughfare, and there are examples of a similar arrangement nearby with habitable rooms and dwellings that front directly onto this street.

Policy DG4 within the Exeter Local Plan First Review states that residential development should be at the maximum feasible density, taking into account site constraints and impact on the local area, and also that development should ensure a quality of amenity which allows residents to feel at ease within their homes and gardens. Within the Council's Design Guide SPD no specific guidance is provided in terms of this form of development, and guidance on "Outlook" only references separation of windows from the blank facades of adjoining buildings – a scenario which does not arise here.

The proposed development at Summerland Street takes a holistic approach to the comprehensive development of the site seeking to provide an inherently efficient form of development (reflecting

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Council policy to maximise density) whilst also providing an appropriate living environment for residents (in this central urban area and within a modern and flexible form of accommodation). Residents will have access to a wide range of spaces and facilities beyond their studio units (the outlook of all which will be slightly different), including high quality managed shared internal amenity areas, and the roof terrace which provides access to a communal outdoor space to be enjoyed by residents of the building only.

Overall, it is considered that the development successfully reflects and responds to the opportunity provided on this City Centre site, providing a positive redevelopment scheme which will overall deliver a high-quality residential environment for future occupiers.

Kitchen and Dining Spaces

As you have noted the scheme as originally submitted took the approach of providing a communal kitchen and dining space on each floor of the proposed building, in part guided by the pre-application engagement undertaken with the Council (including design review). However, as part of the review and revision of the scheme (including a reduction in scale), the decision has been made to consolidate shared amenity spaces into a more limited number of locations within the building. This move has been influenced by the change in scale of the scheme (and the need to balance private and communal amenity spaces overall) but also as a result of specific input provided by operators of Co-Living developments elsewhere in the county – as detailed within the previously submitted documents. This has revealed a move away from the provision of smaller kitchen and dining spaces widely dispersed within buildings, where such spaces are experienced to be fragmented and not to promote social activity and integration of a broad range of people within the building as a whole. The preferences of operators and residents in these development are for larger kitchen and dining spaces, which are able to provide a more active and social experience for residents and which can double up as events space, for the provision of themed cooking events (for example). Larger kitchens see more use, sharing and interaction, compared to dispersed smaller spaces. The provision of shared kitchen and dining space opening onto an external amenity area has been very successful and is a model being adopted now in many co-living developments.

The applicants are strongly of the view that this is the most appropriate way to provide this element of shared amenity within the scheme to complement the private facilities that will also be available to each resident within studio spaces. Residents will retain flexibility in terms of how they choose to live within the building, with some facilities for cooking and eating available within Studios, and the option of choosing to use the shared kitchen and dining facilities that are available as they wish.

As has been encouraged throughout the design process, the building design is flexible such that shared spaces can evolve and be adapted over time to reflect how the needs and demands of residents may evolve – this includes in respect of kitchen and dining spaces which will be flexible and adaptable.

It is noted that the Co-Living scheme previously considered by the Council at Heavitree Road (currently subject to an ongoing appeal) was designed on the basis that there was not communal kitchen and dining facilities on every floor, with provision separated into a limited number of locations throughout that proposed building, including a large communal ground floor space. This scheme was also considerably larger in size than the Summerland Street proposals, with around double the bedspaces and a larger footprint (across each floor of the proposed building). This element of the scheme is not (we understand) disputed between the parties at this appeal.

Co-living housing developments are being considered by policies within the emerging new Exeter Local Plan, although this is not yet at an advanced stage, and in any event contains no specific policy

requirements relating to the location and distribution of communal amenities in these development, requiring only that they are “conveniently located”, with no further qualification or explanation.

Overall, we are firmly of the view that the provision being made by the scheme is appropriate in the context of the building and use being proposed, and the creation of a successful Co-Living development in this location. The applicant is seeking to deliver what is wanted and is successful in other similar schemes.

Daylight and Sunlight

Please find enclosed a further Addendum to the submitted Daylight and Sunlight assessment. This further document has been prepared by Point 2 to specifically address the comments raised and consider in more detail the impacts of the development in respect of windows and rooms within Wheaton House and Acland House. There will be some impacts on theses existing dwellings and the occupants, which is an inevitable consequence of the layout and design of these existing buildings and the efficient development of the application site (having regard to the low-rise nature of buildings presently on the site). This will need to be considered as part of the decision-making process and balanced against the many positive aspects of the application proposals.

We trust that the information submitted is clear and helpful and will allow the Council’s consideration of this application to be concluded.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Ross', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Ross

Director

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