

The Canterbury Society

Development Management
Canterbury City Council
Military Rd
Canterbury
Kent CT1 1YW

30 January 2013

Dear Sir or Madam

Stour Street, St John's Ambulance site: CA/12/02268

The re-development of this site for residential use is to be encouraged, but the design of the proposed development could be much improved. We hope that the Development Management committee will return the plans for further work. The proposals as they stand fail to preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.

First, the proposed development is very dense. Squeezing in six flats and three houses is very high density and it would be preferable to have just the six terraced houses which the 1874 Ordnance Survey map (included in the Design & Access Statement) shows. In addition a three storey building will make the lane claustrophobic. It would look better with two and two-and-a-half storey houses – again, echoing the original dwellings which are illustrated on the attached picture from “Canterbury Before the Blitz” by Paul Crampton.

Secondly, the proposed building does not respect the historic building line and should be set up to the pavement edge. The end house (No.1) could have a rounded corner which would assist in easing the access to the adjoining St. Mary's Court – a concern raised by one of the residents. If the Council are minded to permit some three storey development then this should be at the West end, so that it can act as a 'stop' framing the lower-rise buildings between it and the Lavender Mews corner building.

We recognise that the houses are set back in order to allow access to the garages. It would be preferable if access could be negotiated with Lavender Mews, via their yard, to parking spaces to the rear of the proposed houses. This would make it unnecessary to have unsightly garages along the street.

Thirdly, the appearance of the development is quite alien to Canterbury's historic architecture. Inappropriate details include the inclusion of integral garages, French doors - on the front elevation and at first floor level - and the ironwork of the balconies, which is over-fussy. Furthermore, the form of the houses, especially with the inclusion of traditional elements such as first floor sash windows and dormer windows, jars with the integral garages at ground floor level. Thus if integral garages are to be retained, the houses should have a contemporary aesthetic. If the houses are to be traditional in design then the integral garages must go.

The proposed block of flats too closely resembles the Lavender Mews corner building (for example: the height, the materials and in particular the use of weatherboarding at ground floor level which is unusual, the size and arrangement of windows and the roof pitch appears to be the same) and this repetition devalues the architectural interest of the street.

There are also problems with the chimneys. These are essentially for ornament only, but the double chimney to the left (houses 1 & 2) is at odds with the positioning of the doors – one would expect this shared chimney stack to dictate a reflected plan which would follow through in the elevations. Thus house 1 or house 2 should be reflected so that the entrance doors are side by side. The chimneys are not actually shown on the roof plan.

The roof plan indicates a sizeable flat roof to the block of flats similar to a truncated pyramid. The roof of this block should be re-designed to eliminate the flat roof.

The massing to the rear of the block of flats, with its projecting 'wing' is uncomfortable and the use of sash windows with margin lights has been overdone. Historically, such windows were usually for better rooms. Thus on the rear elevation, one would expect to find sash windows without margin lights or, simpler still, casement windows or a mixture of the two.

We hope that this proposal will be rejected or sent back to be re-considered.

Yours sincerely

Professor Jan Pahl, AcSS, CBE
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