

Application number 49/23/0030 - 2 dwellings (amendment to previous consent of Plots 1 & 2) at The Old Brewery, Golden Hill, Wiveliscombe (retention of part works already undertaken)

As ward councillor, I submit an objection and the following comments on this application.

Approval was given for planning application number 49/06/0008 at this site 17 years ago in 2006, which was to demolish the old brewery buildings and build 14 new dwellings with associated garages, parking and amenity space.

Building work has been undertaken on the site, but the development does not match or comply with the old approved planning application from 2006.

New applications have been submitted to retrospectively seek approval for what is being built.

There are other new applications (49/23/0026 and 49/23/0009) that apply to the same site, as well as the latest application (49/23/0030). These have been submitted by the same applicant.

I welcome good development and new housing on this brownfield site. The lower density now proposed is welcome, with, it appears, 11 dwellings proposed in the three new planning applications instead of the original 14.

However, submitting 3 applications instead of a single application for the site creates uncertainty on what is proposed, including on what aspects of the original application are retained and what aspects are entirely new.

I believe that it would benefit all, including the applicant, for a single full planning application covering proposals for the whole site to be submitted, so that the development proposed can be fully understood and assessed.

It is also hard to understand why it has been claimed the new applications are minor variations, when it is plain to see that they are not.

This new application (49/23/0030) proposes variations for plots 1 and 2 from the original 2006 approved application.

The applicant states in the Design and Access Statement that changes to layout and windows and the house sizes, bulk and height are slight and not materially different, which is not true.

Previously, plots 1 and 2 had two floors. Now three floors are proposed for these buildings, which appear higher. No dimensions or direct comparisons are provided so it is not straightforward to compare.

The changes to the site layout are not minor. Plots 1 and 2 no longer have the relationship and proximity to plots 10 and 3 and 4 that previously applied.

Taken together, the layout of the buildings in the three new applications is very different to the layout proposed in the approved 2006 application.

Conditions for the old approved application require the development to be carried out in accordance with the application and the accompanying plans, which include a Design Statement. This statement has not been followed in several important respects.

The Design Statement says two levels of vaulted basements from the brewery buildings would be retained, due to being “historically important” and housing a bat colony. The Statement says the scheme will “preserve the massing of the existing buildings (demolished as part of the application) which make a significant contribution to the eastern approach to the town”.

The Design Statement says “the new buildings will be constructed in a mix of materials to match that of the surrounding area of Wiveliscombe; natural stone and brick (set aside from the demolition) and coloured render for the walls, high quality artificial slate roofing and timber framed windows and doors stained or microporous painted”. The statement also covers other features including: the use of ironwork, “simple functional designs to echo the site's industrial past”, “pathways in sets or brick paviers”, as well as “two fine dressed stone arches which have survived within the brewery buildings” being “re-erected as features in the courtyard”.

The Design Statement says that the basements below the western part of the site will be preserved as existing to leave the bat colony undisturbed with human access restricted to maintenance purposes only”.

The vaulted basements, below ground, are not mentioned or shown at all in the new applications. A survey should be undertaken to ensure the bat colony has been left undisturbed.

The new buildings do not preserve the massing of the demolished buildings. Natural stone and bricks have not been set aside for building the walls. There is little or no sign of other good features from the original Design Statement, which is part of the approved plans, in the new buildings and new applications.

The proposed new buildings are sited in front of two of the most prominent landmark structures in Wiveliscombe, which are the old brewery tower and chimney. The higher roof lines that appear to be now proposed are not addressed in a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which I believe should be required to accompany such an application.

Most of the development site is in the town’s Conservation Area, with the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal (September 2007) listing the former brewery buildings as important buildings that “form a distinctive component of the skyline” (page 30).

The proposed block plan shows different landscaping and a different arrangement for parking and vehicle access to the approved old application (49/06/0008), with no description and a lack of details in the new application.

This new application does not show how vehicles will access the public highway, how sufficient parking spaces will be provided and gives no details on cycle storage or electric vehicle charging, which need to be provided.

The new application lacks important information on landscaping, boundary walls, fences or hedges (covered by conditions 5 and 7 for the old application decision, which are yet to be met and needed approval before any part of the permitted development commenced).

The new application also lacks sufficient information on how ground stability will be ensured on this difficult and sloping site, including for adjoining land. Condition 18 for the decision on the original application required full details for the stabilisation of the adjoining land including results of a geotechnical survey. As far as I know, a geotechnical survey has not been submitted and is still lacking. A new planning statement has been submitted for retaining walls built on site, but not information on how these will be maintained and their integrity ensured for the future.

Previous surveys (see documents supplied for application number 49/06/0008) have shown the site provides an important habitat for bats, which is not covered in the current application. One of the drawings supplied with the original approved application ((A3) DrNo 10505 Proposed Site/Location Plan) shows a retained bat exit from cellar and the location of one bat colony. There is further information on bats in other documents supplied with the original application. Conditions 16, 23 and 26 for the decision on the approved old application required measures to be undertaken to maintain bat roosts and access, retain swifts nesting, and to maintain the favourable conservation status for bats.

The provision for waste and recycling containers shown in the block plan lacks detail and does not meet requirements, which are shown in developer guidance for waste and recycling collections available from the new Somerset Council at: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/developer-guidance/>.

The answers given in the climate emergency checklist lack detail and what is suggested is not shown in the plans provided with the application. Energy efficiency for the building fabric is not covered. Air source heat pumps are a welcome proposal but not shown in application plans. There is no detail on how the construction will utilise circular economy principles in material selection and use. From conditions for the approved planning application in 2006 (condition 3 and Design Statement), stone and brick from the demolition of the brewery buildings is to be reused in exterior walls, but arrangements have not been made to allow this and it has not been done.

It is not clear how the Section 106 agreement for the old approved application (49/06/0008) will apply to the new planning applications, including 49/23/0030. Will the old Section 106 agreement be replaced by an up-to-date equivalent making similar provisions?

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Upper Tone, Somerset Council
24 June 2023