

APP/13/01255: 7 East Street, Havant
APP/13/01257: 9 East street, Havant

I am providing a combined response to these two applications as similar considerations apply.

General

There is universal agreement that the East Street area is in need of improvement. Careful well considered sensitive, co-ordinated selective infill and new development is the key to regenerating the area. In terms of the East Street frontage now under consideration there is an opportunity to address the present “gap” in the frontage. Offering development potential as well as visual improvement.

Guidance

Various guidance exists to provide direction on what is likely to be acceptable. This includes The Conservation Area Character Assessment & Management Plan (CACAMP) & Urban Design Framework – both of which have gone through public consultation and have been formally adopted. There is also a Draft Development Brief. Most pertinent to the current proposals is CACAMP which states:-

,,, the existing range of 3 single storey shops represents a disruption to the historic street scene, which comprises predominantly 3 storey buildings with some 2 storey buildings, organically developed on relatively narrow plots. Whilst the 3 shops reflect this rhythm of narrow plot widths and the traditional - if much altered shop fronts - have some merit, the single storey nature of the development creates a major gap in the street elevation. This area is therefore identified as having development potential. The MP goes on to set out development objectives, which are as follows:

- Any redevelopment proposals for the sites should take the opportunity to reinstate a continuous, though varied 3 and 2½ storey frontage;
- Uses at ground floor level should remain as retail (or possibly some commercial). Commercial or residential uses should be on upper floors. Access to upper floors should be via front doors on the street frontage;
- It is essential that the vertical rhythm of the street scene is preserved in any redevelopment, through the clear elevational expression of each of the three properties. It would be unacceptable to produce a design scheme characterised by three identical bays producing a uniform elevation of horizontal emphasis across the three bays;
- It is also essential that the height of each bay should be subtly varied by the use of parapets, eaves, or by adopting a “2½” storey elevation;
- Windows should be vertically proportioned;

An informal sketch street elevation was produced to further illustrate this.

The Proposals

1. A welcome development is the consideration of a series of smaller building developments within an overall more unified framework, rather than some of the more grandiose schemes that have proceeded it.

2. In policy terms the Council has signalled that insistence on the maintenance of a retail street frontage may no longer be feasible. A wholly residential scheme as proposed is not therefore out of the question. It is nevertheless more challenging as it is important to provide visual interest at street level where privacy can be an issue.
3. Although some attempt has been made to break down the street frontage to provide the desired vertical rhythm it fails in three important respects;
 - a. The street elevations simply serve as window dressing to overly large and bulky buildings. The roofs are little more than a skirt to a flat roofed building which pays no regard to the established pattern of development in the area into which it has to knit.
 - b. The development fails to provide the required rhythm and differentiation in scale as a direct consequence, and in so doing fails to respond to the adopted in any meaningful sense.
 - c. Architecturally the elevations are poor, with a confusion of styles between and within the same building. This particularly but not exclusively applies to the principal street elevation.
4. The Architect appears to have been hamstrung by an ambition to secure a four storey frontage development, which of necessity prevents the variety of form and scale required.
5. I can not support the present schemes for the reasons stated. I am keen to find a solution. Useful pointers towards an acceptable approach are provided in the guidance already referred to, the illustrative informal sketch provided in conjunction with the CACAMP and the earlier (now lapsed) permission ref; 07/51427/011.
6. I await the findings of the Design Panel with interest in the hope of steering to a more positive outcome.

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