

The Revised (Dec 2012) Planning Application 11/00143/FUL

Introduction

The amended Planning Application for re-development of Cofferridge Close is only marginally different from the previous version. Most of the proposed changes, mainly in response to comments from English Heritage, are essentially cosmetic (retention and replacement of some colonnades, the number of mature trees for removal reduced from 51 to 46, a small 'feature wall', a marginal increase in the area of grass to be retained, retention of a circular seating structure...). Other changes include improvements to pedestrian routes, a taxi drop-off point, and retention of the 8 privately owned garages in response to objections from their owners.

It is noteworthy that in the section of the *Revised Planning Statement* dealing with the 'Planning History' (Section 4), no mention is made that:

- SSTC unanimously voted to object to the Application after a public meeting in March 2011, and asked for an alternative 'Plan B' to be submitted, avoiding largescale demolition, and proposing a smaller, but improved, project,
- at the annual Town Meeting in March 2012 none of the 56 residents in attendance voted to support the Application,
- over 400 people had registered objections to the proposal on the MKC Public Access website,
- a petition objecting to the Application, signed by 373 staff and customers of Budgens was submitted to MKC in February 2011,
- three expert reports criticising the application, on *Transport Assessment*, *Loss of Amenity* and *Economic Sustainability*, had been available on the MKC Public Access website since August 2012.

The only mention of any substantive criticism (Section 4.7) refers to the comments made by English Heritage in their report of May 2012, listing the row of houses in Silver Street.

Because MKC have refused to allow the developers to 'stop up' (i.e privatise) the public highway in the Close, the proposed 149, time limited (2 hours, 7 days/week) parking spaces will be subject to control by MKC (rather than by any eventual operator). 62 of the existing 69 free long stay parking slots will go, 7 being retained for use of residents of adjacent properties.

The existing road network which traffic trying to enter Cofferridge Close is obliged to use is already almost at saturation point. The applicant's traffic assessment shows that the number of trips into the Close will more than double. A store of the size proposed will require 8 daily HGV deliveries through the narrow arch into the Close - this is a fourfold increase over the twice daily deliveries to the existing Budgens store, each one of which causes backing up of other traffic in Silver Street during negotiation of the arch into the Close. No night time deliveries will be permitted because of neighbouring houses, so all 8 deliveries will have to occur during day-time hours when the road network is already

busy. To claim that “...*the additional delivery vehicles will provide a negligible increase in vehicle movements*“ (Section 6.33, *Revised Planning Statement*) is absurd.

No provision is made in the revised Application for alternative food shopping facilities in the town centre during the estimated 18 months of re-development work, despite the many occasions on which this issue has been raised by SSTC and local residents

Specific Amendments

Below is the complete text of the section of the developer's Revised Planning Statement summarising the changes from the previous version of the Planning Application:

« 3.9 For clarity, the revised scheme incorporates the following changes:

- Provision of a new feature wall within the car park (included within a landscape setting) which echoes the end wall of the existing office building (to be demolished), providing a reference to the old building and its relationship with the dwellings on Silver Street;
- Retention of additional bays of the colonnade (now 9 in total), overlapping between the existing and new buildings and assisting in integrating the new foodstore into the retained elements of the existing building. It also provides a continuation of the historic form of the pedestrian route between the High Street and Silver Street (which continues along the front of the proposed foodstore and through the newly configured car park);
- Increase in the area of green space being retained to the rear of the foodstore;
- Increase in the width of the pedestrian route from Market Place;
- Retention of the circular seating to the northern boundary of the site;
- Retention of the garages and green space to the rear of the houses on Horsefair Green and Silver Street;
- Creation of a dedicated drop off and taxi point;
- Adjustment to the pedestrian route adjacent to the proposed service yard to increase pedestrian safety and the aesthetics of the route;
- Reduction in the size of the service road to reduce the width of the pedestrian crossing to the Silver Street entrance;
- Increase in the size of the service turning circle;
- Realignment of the trees within the western parking area to create a more formal arrangement;
- Reinstatement of the columns removed previously from the High Street frontage. »