

Objection by Stobswell Forum

Application 16/00367/FULL |

Land to East of Eliza Street Dundee, Erection of 36 flats and 4 semi-detached houses, formation of access, parking and bin / cycle storage. |

Based on the current Local Development Plan, the emerging Local Development Plan Review and the consultation response by the Stobswell Forum in respect of that Review, the Forum would welcome the early development of this derelict and prominent site at the heart of the community. It further recognises that the proposed increase in density is in line with the emerging LDP Review and the Forum's views thereon. However, the Forum feels strongly that such a development should only proceed if it is to be of the highest standard and quality. Regretfully the Forum is of the view that this proposal falls far short of the standards expected and therefore wishes to object to this proposal.

The objection is based on the following grounds;

There is a lack of information on the submitted plans

It is claimed at 2.4 of the Design and Access Statement that the proposed flats at the corner of Molison Street and Eliza Street will tie into the gable of the existing Molison Street tenements. The submitted drawings, however, do not show the proposed buildings in their context. The submission provides no information regards the respective heights of the existing and proposed buildings either at Molison Street/Eliza Street or with the proposed semi-detached houses and the existing Dura Street properties. This is particularly important since, as the Statement points out, the site is opposite an A category Listed Building, abuts the Maryfield Conservation Area and the development must not affect the setting of the Listed Building or the Conservation Area.

The submitted plan indicates a break in the alignment of blocks 2 and 3 but this is not featured on either the elevations or the roof.

The submitted plans are vague in respect of the treatment of the existing stone boundary walls or whether or how they are to be replaced.

There is an over provision of undersized one-bedroom flats

The balance between flats and houses is revised from the 2005 consent. The number of flats is increased from 20 to 36 and the houses reduced from 10 town houses to 4 semi-detached, ie the total units increased from 30-40. This generally concurs with the position of Stobswell Forum as stated in its response to the LDP Review consultation. The existing brownfield site like Eliza Street close to the city centre and well served by transport schools and shops must be developed as a priority and an increase in density would provide support to the viability of the district shopping centre. However, the applicant claims to provide 11 one bedroom flats whereas the accommodation schedule indicates there are actually 15 such flats. On two counts this is contrary to LDP Policy 9: Design of New Housing, *inter alia*, "All new housing development will require to conform to the guidance on the Design of New Housing set out in Appendix 3" which states that "...All flats will have a minimum of 2 bedrooms or a minimum gross internal floor area of 60 sqm." The proposal includes 15 x 1 bedroom flats ie 42% of all units and furthermore these flats are only 50sqm in floor area, ie almost 20% smaller than the minimum required in Policy 9. Justification for this is claimed on the basis that the additional £1,100 cost per sqm cannot be justified for this application."

Whilst Stobswell Forum is not in a position to dispute the additional cost quoted the Forum does not accept that this should be the bottom line, rather that the interests of the local community in terms of pedestrian and traffic safety and the quality of the built environment should be paramount. Further, that any development on a key site such as this must be of a high quality, safe and, importantly, it must be “future proof”. We are aware that for possibly two decades the Council has been demolishing one bedroom flats for a variety of reasons not least of which is difficulty to let them. In addition, the modern family increasingly needs a two bedroom unit, eg, in order that separated couples can each enjoy custody rights with their family, elderly tenants can receive care, perhaps involving overnight stays, in their own home or the unemployed can more easily get back into employment or business from a “workroom” or “study” at home. The reduced floorspace results in these flats having combined kitchen, dining, living spaces, which can only be described as sub-standard. The fact that the developer is a social housing provider is no reason for them to deliver a product which is already substandard and likely to become more so in terms of accommodation in comparison to similar flats provided by the private sector.

The proposed open space does not conform to Policy requirements.

Appendix 3 of the Local Development Plan seeks usable private communal garden area of a minimum of 100 sqm or 10 sqm per flat, whichever is greater, ie 360 sqm of usable private communal garden area has to be provided. The submitted drawings indicate some 610 sqm of garden space, however a considerable amount of that is given over to landscaping and therefore not “usable”. The space is sandwiched between the flats in Molison Street and the proposed flats. It is also north of block 4 and east of blocks 2 and 3. It will therefore likely be deprived of sunlight for most of the day. The plan does not identify drying areas for the flats which should be in addition to the private communal garden area. This issue could be alleviated by introducing balconies that are usable and attractive in terms of size and outlook to the flats. This would also introduce interest to the bland elevations of the flats.

The proposed open space is overlooked contrary to Policy requirements.

Appendix 3 of the Local Development Plan requires that “living room windows should not unacceptably overlook private gardens of houses”. A number of the living room windows of block 4 overlook the gardens of the four houses. Whilst the houses have in excess of the 50sqm sought in the LDP all this space is overlooked by both the flats in block 4 and the flats in Dura Street. In the absence of any detail of the height of boundary enclosures the gardens between the houses and the footpath cannot be considered private.

Vehicular accesses to the site conflicts with other adjacent accesses and junctions

The principal access to the site is particularly close to the junction of Eliza Street and Catherine Street. This is an exceptionally busy junction heavily used by parents taking children to Clepington School. As with most schools this area suffers from seemingly uncontrollable extensive “rogue” parking by parents adding to the congestion over long periods. The previous application identified a vehicular access between the Catherine Street junction and the Molison Street/ Eliza Street corner. This seems an eminently safer and more sensible location. Stobswell Forum considers the current proposed access solution is unsafe and would present an unacceptable risk to passers-by, in particular parents/carers taking children to school. Two private drives are to be provided for the houses from Eliza Street with two parking spaces located to the rear. The proposed driveways are opposite the access/egress to the Dura Street car park and where the Cleansing Department recycling

vehicle has to park for prolonged spells to empty the various underground containers at the recycling centre. The Forum would prefer that all parking should be provided to the rear

Parking provision is inadequate

Appendix 3 of the Local Development Plan seeks 100% parking provision in the social rented sector and that “this provision may be increased or decreased in light of on street and off street parking provision nearby”. 100% parking is to be provided with no visitor parking. Any visitor parking cannot be on street since all streets in the area have parking restrictions. Dura Street car park is available but increasingly it is virtually full whether by residents or commuters using it as “park-and-ride” all to the disadvantage of the shopper. The Forum considers that visitor parking should be accommodated on site.

Parking provision for wheelchair users is inappropriately located

The spaces for the wheelchair flats are remote requiring the tenants either to cross the service road or travel along the service road to reach the flat entry. The Forum considers that these spaces should be located adjacent to the accessible flats.

Parking provision is unattractive

The parking area generally is a bleak expanse of unrelieved hard surface. The Forum considers that this space should be broken up by the introduction of landscaping of a mixed scale. The Forum considers that contrasting Brindle pavements to distinguish the parking bays and the circulation space would be more appropriate than the proposed tarmac adjacent to the Conservation Area

Storage for bikes is inappropriate

Appendix 3 of the Local Development Plan requires secure indoor storage for bikes. A single secure, covered, not indoor, cycle store is proposed, centrally located for 36 cycles with cycle space in the private gardens of the four houses. The covered spaces are not “indoors”. They are also remote from the entrances to the flats and less likely to be secure. The Forum considers that the solution identified does not conform to the LDP policy. A far better solution would be for an appropriate number of secure cycle spaces to be provided indoors in each block of flats.

In the absence of any detail it cannot be said that a “cycle space in the private gardens of the four houses” can be considered secure. The Forum considers that the layout fails on this point too.

Bin storage is inappropriate

Bin stores for the houses are to be located in the front gardens. This would be in full view of the street and is considered wholly unacceptable. These should be located in the rear gardens.

One central bin store is to be provided for all the flats. This is considered to be a substandard solution. It would involve all tenants, including those occupying the wheelchair flats to leave the tenement close to access the central storage space. It is not clear what type of bin is to be used but there appears to be very little space in which to manoeuvre the bins between the storage space and the boundary wall en route to the refuse vehicle. The Forum considers this to be a substandard solution and that appropriate bin stores should be provided within each tenement close so that they can be reached under cover.

The design and layout of the proposed buildings is inappropriate in their setting

The Forum considers the provision of two semi-detached blocks, being set back from the heel line at an obscure angle leaving large areas oddly shaped gardens without any clear indication of

a boundary treatment or whether it is “open plan” is totally alien to this highly urban corner of Stobswell. The houses should be replaced by town houses to provide scale and a continuous street edge.

The Forum has reservations regarding the overlooking of the school playground but acknowledges that the site planning brief indicates that taller buildings would be acceptable here and that the earlier consent creates a precedent.

The submitted drawings are unclear as to the treatment of the existing stone wall. It could be incorporated into the walls of the flats. Alternatively the blocked openings could be suitably treated, possibly with public art, and wallheads capped to create boundaries private gardens.

The juxtaposition of block 1 to the existing Molison Street block is clumsy and leaves what appears to be a “cats’ close” between the two buildings. The flats are set out to create an open sided courtyard but most of the living room windows in block 4 face north into the shaded open space. The elevations of the flats are totally uninspiring and lacking in interest. There is no variation in window size or arrangement. The introduction of balconies would alleviate the lack of truly private space for each flat and give relief to the elevations. The Eliza Street/Molison Street corner and the deflection in the Eliza Street elevation offer opportunity to introduce features to the elevations. The roofscape is uninspiring. A feature of Stobswell is the variety of corner features at roof level where can be found spires, turrets, finials, etc. A modern interpretation of such features would bring welcome interest, relief from the bland appearance of the proposal and raise it above the appearance of an immediate post-war housing estate block.

The Forum considers the floorscape to be important and urges that any development on this site adjacent to the Conservation Area should retain the granite sett road surface and reuse and if necessary recover granite or whin kerbing.

Overall the development fails to respect the A category Listed Building, Clepington School, opposite nor does it complement the adjacent Maryfield Conservation Area,

Future opportunities to reinforce the existing retail provision in Dura Street are prejudiced

The emerging LDP Review urges that means be explored to increase the retail footprint of Stobswell, in particular the Albert Street District Centre. It appears to the Stobswell Forum that this proposal could offer albeit a modest opportunity in this respect. The Dura Street parade of shops, including a number who either provide, or could provide, food and refreshments have rear premises that face south. The “space left over after parking” could, in partnership with local traders be rationalised to accommodate the expansion of these shop units.

Stobswell Forum

12 May 2016