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6th February 2024

Proposed development at Esso garage development, Bishop's Waltham
Planning application ref. 23/02631/FUL

Dear Mr Taylor

While the Bishop's Waltham Society would very much welcome a development on this site, as a replacement for the unsightly derelict garage and forecourt that is presently spoiling the Conservation Area in front of the Palace, these current proposals are not suitable. As a result we object to them for the following reasons:

- **Scale and dominance of proposed development:** *Policy 4.1 of the Bishop's Waltham Design Statement states that Developments should consist of groupings of houses of a size and type that are small enough to encourage neighbourliness and social interaction, each having its own character and architectural style.* The proposed development is more akin to an urban townhouse development – tall, narrow conjoined dwellings of exactly the same proportion and design. The design is thus inconsistent with Policy 4.1.
- **Layout and density of buildings:** *Policy 5. of the Bishop's Waltham Design Statement (Mass; Size, shape and height dominating the surroundings) states that (5.1) Buildings should not dominate distant views or their immediate surroundings and that (5.2) Buildings should generally be no higher than 2½ storeys – i.e. top storey in roof.* The proposed development backs immediately onto the historic North Pond and viewing area, thus diminishing the visual amenity for the very many individuals and families who spend recreational and/or reflective time at this important part of Bishop's Waltham. The development evidences a density of only one room width so to allow the building and sale of six narrow dwellings, maximising the return for the developer at the expense of any design consistent with other dwellings in the town. It is unfortunate that the developer's design statement states confidently that *"the area is more suited to a high density development due to the character of the area and the*

supporting infrastructure and facilities”. This description is patently not the case as there are no other examples of such ‘town house’ high density dwelling developments in the immediate area.

- **Roofs: material, pitch and line:** *Policy 10 of the Bishop’s Waltham Design Statement stipulates the following: 10.1 Roof lines should exhibit variety such as different heights and gable ends, and including chimneys where appropriate. 10.2 Roofs should be made of clay tiles (or sustainable alternatives of similar appearance) with traditional decorations or occasional use of slate. 10.3 Dormer windows should not dominate the character of the building.* The proposed development is clearly 3 storeys in height with total uniformity of roof line. There is no effort whatever to offer, in such a prominent location, any character consistent with the mediaeval market town for either residents or the many visitors to the historic Palace ruins just opposite.
- **Parking issues e.g. adequacy, turning, loading:** The developer has provided for two car parking spaces for each of the six dwellings which should be sufficient for the three bedroomed properties. It should be noted however that the Sainsburys car park adjacent is restricted in time and use for their customers only.
- **Drainage and flood risk:** While there is anticipated to be a 15% reduction in impermeable surfaces to partially offset any risk of surface water flooding, why is there not at least 100% permeable surfacing materials being proposed for the car parking area and approach to each dwelling? Given the location of the development so adjacent to the North Pond and the increasing frequency of storms and increased rainfall, the estimation of a one in a hundred-year chance of flooding described in the flood risk assessment seems over optimistic.
- **Hazardous material, contaminated land:** Given the previous use of the land as a petrol station, the recommendation made by the WCC Environmental Health representative that *“No development shall take place unless otherwise agreed in writing until a scheme to deal with contamination shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority”*, is very welcome.
- **Impact on character or appearance of area (visual amenity):** it is recognised by the developer in its Design, Access and Heritage statement that *“along the northern boundary of the Palace site there are some breaks in the tree line through which the proposed site and the existing buildings are visible from within the boundary of the SAM. This means the proposed development will have some visual impact on the*

setting of the Palace” ruins. It would be reassuring to know that there is a plan to mitigate this.

In summary therefore, while we are pleased to see a proposal to develop this unsightly plot, but we feel strongly that a lot more thought and imagination should be given to the building design to reflect greater consistency with the mediaeval market town of Bishops Waltham.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Shepherd', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robin Shepherd
Chairman, Bishop's Waltham Society