

Cllr. Carmen Appich
BH2020/00776 - 6 Princes Crescent

22nd May 2020:

The applicants submitted a planning application for a substantial refurbishment and new extension in early September 2018. (BH2018/02760)

After suggested changes as a result of consultation with the Conservation Officer and CAG (Conservation Advisory Group) the application was approved on 25th October 2018. Several minor changes were made to the original plan, in consultation with Council officers, that resulted in the final approval for all changes being granted on 23 January 2020 (BH2019/03533)

Work was scheduled to start early in 2020. Further consultations with the contractor prior to the preparation of the site, and an additional inspection from the structural engineer at this time, found that the building is not suitable for refurbishment due to its poor structural condition and the senior structural engineer recommended it should be demolished and rebuilt based on the approved plan.

He also stated the additional benefits of doing so, including an opportunity to use enhanced modern materials, better insulation and energy saving measures. At this time they removed the approved basement parking from the scheme to reduce the budget and site disturbance and the contractor submitted the demolition application on the 10th March.

The structural engineer's report and a report on the viability of the project from the applicants' contract administrator were also submitted to the Council. The Heritage Officer had concerns about building a new garage in the front in place of the underground parking so this garage was removed from the new scheme.

The Urban Design Officer also commented that there was an opportunity to make the building more contemporary so once again the applicant made some suggested changes to seek to take into account the suggestions made.

There were a few objections and comments from close neighbours in Westbourne Place, but these have been addressed by reducing the size of originally planned dormers and removing the rear building, thus increasing the distance between their amenity spaces and the applicants' property.

The other objection is from the CAG , but this does not seem to take account of the modifications to the design following consultations with Heritage, and appears to contradict its earlier support of the 2018 application. The central chimney breast they refer to was, I understand, an outlet for a fuel boiler and built in the 1970s , so not part of the original design.

I have visited the property, and discussed the scheme with the applicants and their contractor. I have been impressed by the applicants' desire to engage with Council officers and neighbours – for example in offering to rebuild the existing flint walls at the rear of the property.

I have looked at neighbouring buildings, particularly Barford Court, and it seems to me that the proposed fenestration and brick elevations will bring the building more in line with the architecture of that building than it is now.

The existing building has extensive damage, and, even if it were to be restored, would require an almost total rebuild.

In summary, I cannot see what substantial changes there are between the application already approved referred to above, and this new application, other than improvements to the design and footprint of the building agreed with Heritage and Urban Design officers.

I therefore urge the Committee to approve the application.