



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
Planning Committee

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 23 August 2011
DIRECTORATE: Planning and Regeneration
HEAD OF PLANNING: Susan Bridge

N/2011/0305 **Conversion of a single dwelling into three flats: one two-bedroom and two one-bedroom (as amended by revised plan received on 4 July 2011) at 22 Watkin Terrace**

WARD: Castle

APPLICANT: Mr. C. Burnhope
AGENT: Stimpson Walton Bond Architects

REFERRED BY: Cllr. T. Clarke
REASON: Concerns over density of area

DEPARTURE: No

Note: this application was one transferred from WNDC on 1st April 2011.

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVAL with conditions for the following reasons:

The proposed conversion to three self-contained flats will not cause substantially more harm to the amenity of the area than the permitted uses of the house, will bring a vacant property back into use and will not prejudice the established character of the area in accordance with Policies H24, H3, H6, E26 and H21 of the Northampton Local Plan and PPS3 – Housing.

2. THE PROPOSAL

2.1 This planning application was first reported to the Planning Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2011. The proposal was for the conversion of the property to four self-contained flats. Having debated the application and having conducted a Committee site visit, Committee resolved to defer determination of the application so as to allow the Head of Planning to discuss with the applicant the issues raised by the Committee.

2.2 In accordance with the Committee resolution officers have engaged in negotiations with the applicant. These discussions have led to the submission of revised plans which reduce the number of proposed flats from four to three.

2.3 The current proposal is therefore for the conversion of this single dwelling into one two-bedroom flat at basement/ground floor level, and two one-bedroom flats at first floor and second floor/attic level, with no external alterations to the property.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 22 Watkin Terrace (a cul-de-sac) is a three-storey house in a row of 25 similar properties dating from the mid 1800's within a residential area, with the Racecourse adjacent to the north. The property has rear bay windows, a rear balcony and a rear garden on the north side overlooking the Racecourse, and to the front it faces directly onto the street, with light wells and railings. The site is within the Kingsley Conservation Area and this property is currently vacant.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 No recent history; information from local residents is that the property has been in use as a single dwelling house for many years.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The current Development Plan comprises of the East Midlands Regional Plan, the saved policies of the Northamptonshire County Structure Plan and Northampton Local Plan 1997.

5.2 National Policies:

PPS 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS3 – Housing

PPS5 – Historic Environment

PPG13 – Transport

5.3 Northampton Borough Local Plan

E19 – Implementing new development

E20 – New Development

E26 – Conservation Areas

H6 – Housing Development within Primarily Residential Areas

H21 & H23 – Conversion to flats

H24 – Basement flats

- 5.4 **Supplementary Planning Guidance**
Northamptonshire County Parking Standards SPG 2003
Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004

6. CONSULTATIONS / REPRESENTATIONS

Consultations: (both those received by NBC and WNDC)

- 6.1 **NBC Built Conservation** – no objections as there are no proposed alterations to the exterior of the property, therefore impact on the Conservation Area will be neutral.
- 6.2 **NBC Environmental Protection** – no objections to principle of proposal, but suggests that any approval is subject to a condition requiring that the bin storage area is installed in accordance with details submitted on drawing ref.2011/08/101 rev.B.
- 6.3 **Town Centre Manager** – no comments
- 6.4 **NCC Highways** – referred to Standing Advice. Covered secure cycle parking is to be provided and secured by condition prior to first occupation of the development.
- 6.5 **Northamptonshire Police** – no objections, but recommended various security measures as Watkin Terrace suffers from rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour, criminal damage to buildings and some burglaries.

Representations: (both those received by NBC and WNDC)

- 6.6 Representations have been received from **24, 28 & 44 Watkin Terrace (2 letters); 13 & 51 Beaconsfield Terrace; 32 (3 letters), 46 (2 letters) & 50 Watkin Terrace; 25, 33 & 57 Beaconsfield Terrace.** These letters raise objections that centred on the following:
- character of the conservation area will be further lost;
 - insufficient parking causing a big problem, unsustainable situation, have received parking tickets as had to double-park; unsafe situation for a woman not able to park near her residence;
 - problem of household waste from multi-occupancy dwellings left on street, due to insufficient space for rubbish to be stored, causing risk to health, vermin problems and will be detrimental to resident's amenity.
 - fly-tipping on street of abandoned items by tenants/landlords as tenants change in multi-occupancy dwellings;
 - noise pollution with loud music blaring at night;
 - anti-social behaviour with people in the street who don't care about the environment or community;
 - parking congestion in area/street will cause difficulty for emergency vehicles;
 - close-knit community in the street is not contributed to by occupants of rented flats on a short tenure, and increasing number of flats will upset balance;
 - over-development of the street.

- A number of the large houses in Watkin Terrace be converted into flats over the years. It is understandable given the size of the houses. However the number converted in the street has reached saturation point in terms of the impact on the local amenity.
- There are already see large amounts of rubbish left out from the current flats in the area as well as a continual parking problem in the street. Clearly the conversion of another single dwelling into 4 flats will potentially add a number of additional cars into the street all trying to find a parking place as well as add to the volume of rubbish being created.
- Watkin and Beaconsfield Terrace are excluded from The Mounts residents parking scheme so attract cars parking here during the day when the rest of the area is covered by the parking scheme. The situation in the street has been getting worse and worse over the years as the number of residents in the street increases as houses are converted into flats. There are numerous instances of residents double-parking in the evenings which makes it impossible for emergency vehicles to access all the properties in the street should the worst happen. In fact I have witnessed an ambulance getting stuck because of this scenario. Whilst there are some spaces alongside The Racecourse these soon get taken up and trying to park in the area in the evening is an absolute nightmare. Potentially another 4 vehicles from this development cannot be accommodated in the current parking arrangements for the street.
- There are disabled people living in the street – they need to be able to park close to the house and not streets away – they cannot ride bicycles.
- Most of the Mounts area is permit parking except for Watkin Terrace and we can't just go and park in other streets hence we are forced to double park even though we are at risk from ticketing.
- Women who work late have to park their cars streets away and feel unsafe and vulnerable.
- No 34 Watkin Terrace has only been renovated on the outside – the inside will be done later on in the year and so we do not yet feel the impact of yet another four flats coming onto the street.
- It has been highlighted in some residents letters that Watkin Terrace/Beaconsfield Terrace is a cul-de-sac and this further impacts on the infrastructure of the street and we are forced to double park making it is very difficult to manoeuvre and turn around and blocking access. Cul-de-sacs are to have street lighting turned off from July 2011 and this will be so very dangerous.
- Gardens of the Watkin Terrace are very small and there is nowhere to put all this rubbish without it impacting onto neighbouring houses.
- Once the flat conversions are made the individual units are very small and you get large numbers of people living in a small contained area resulting in bags and bags of rubbish being put out onto the street at any time.

6.7 Also a **petition of 48 signatures in objection** was received in response to the re-notification of the amended plan, objecting to the proposal on the basis that it will exacerbate the level of rubbish on the street (photos attached), parking problems, anti-social behaviour, and be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. A plan submitted with the petition shows a breakdown of use density in the street.

- 6.8 Email received from Cllr Danielle Stone stating that she fully supports the objectors in opposition to further multi-occupancy dwellings in Watkin Terrace.
- 6.9 A copy of a letter that was sent to Eric Pickles, MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government outlining concerns of residents as noted above in paras. 6.6 and 6.7 was received from Clare Conrad, 44 Watkin Terrace.

7. APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The main issues to consider are the acceptability of the property for conversion to flats and its impact on the character of the area, and the potential impacts of the development on amenity and parking in the area.

Principle of conversion

- 7.2 Local Plan Policy H23 states that in order for a dwelling to be suitable for conversion to flats, it should have a combined ground and first floor area of not less than 100m² and a frontage of not less than 4.7m.
- 7.3 It is noted that the combined internal floor measurement of the ground and first floor of this property does not meet the 100m² requirement of the policy (being approx. 87m²), although the frontage exceeds the required 4.7m. With reference to its preamble, Policy H23 is intended to prevent the conversion of small terraced properties that are not readily capable of conversion and securing an adequate standard of residential environment for future occupants as flats. It is not considered that the development would conflict with the objectives of the Policy due to its size (with eight bedrooms). Moreover, there will be access for all three flats to the rear garden (which is a requirement of national planning policy), which also provides bin and cycle storage areas.

Amenity

- 7.5 Local Plan Policy H6(a) for housing in residential areas, states that permission will be granted except where the development would be at a scale or density which would be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area or would result in over-intensive development of the site.
- 7.6 Policy H21 of the Local Plan states that permission will not be granted for the conversion of a house to flats where it is considered that the introduction of or increase in the number of conversions would prejudice the character or amenity of a particular locality, irrespective of whether the house is suitable for conversion.
- 7.7 Local Plan Policy H24 states that permission for flats in basements will be granted only where adequate self-contained access is provided and where there is adequate natural daylight and where the outlook is not unduly obstructed.

- 7.8 In assessing this proposal against Policies H6 and H21, the character of the street has to be determined. Watkin Terrace on the north side consists of 25 terraced properties, and the other side of the street (Beaconsfield Terrace) consists of traditional Victorian terraced houses, none of which have permission for conversion to flats/HIMOs, although the plan submitted with the petition shows that some of the properties in Beaconsfield Terrace have been converted to flats and HIMOs. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that, of the 55 properties on the street, there is a fairly equal split between single family dwellings and flats.
- 7.9 It is evident from the comments received from neighbours (paragraph 6.6 above) that they consider that the amenity of the street is being detrimentally affected by domestic waste/rubbish on the street, parking congestion, and anti-social behaviour such as loud noise/music late at night, and they consider that this proposal would exacerbate these problems, by further increasing densities and altering the character of the street.
- 7.10 Para. 3.44 of the Local Plan discusses the issue of the 'cumulative effect' of conversions of houses to flats. It must be acknowledged that a dwelling of this size could potentially house a large family (with, perhaps, 2-3 cars), or such a house could be used as a House In Multiple Occupation with up to six people living communally with perhaps 4-6 cars, with both uses also potentially generating significant rubbish, without planning permission under the current prevailing planning controls.
- 7.11 It is therefore considered that the proposal would not significantly alter the established character of the street beyond how it could be lawfully used, and it will be bringing back into productive use an under-utilised building in a central location, in accord with national policy (PPS3) which encourages the re-use of previously developed land.
- 7.12 In order to address the potential issue of on-street refuse storage, a bin storage area is proposed in the rear garden, which is sufficiently large to acceptably accommodate such facilities. This is in accordance with Policy H19, which states that planning permission will only be granted where any adverse effect of a development is allowed for or mitigated against. The policy goes on to say that the amenities made necessary by the development will either be in existence or will be provided by the developer.
- 7.13 In assessing the proposal against Policy H24, the amended plan shows that the basement area now forms part of the ground floor flat. It is considered that the opening up of the ground floor will significantly increase light/outlook to the kitchen/living areas in the basement, therefore satisfying the requirements of this policy.

Parking

- 7.14 The response from the Highway Authority refers to Standing Advice, and its response to WNDC calls for secured covered cycle parking to be provided on site, to be secured by condition.

- 7.15 In two other fairly recent applications in this terrace for conversion to four flats that were approved by WNDC, (no. 34 - 09/0102/FULWNN and no. 14 - 07/0142/COUWNN), it was considered that the existing parking congestion problem in the area was mitigated sufficiently by the sustainable location of the site, and by the required provision of on-site cycle parking facilities. It is acknowledged that these two factors do help to mitigate the problems of parking congestion in the area. When the case officer visited the site during the middle of the day, it was evident that there is a high demand for the limited on-street parking available. Nonetheless, it is considered that the proposal would not exacerbate the problem significantly more than the other possible uses of the house (as noted above in paragraph 7.6). For these reasons and with reference to the advice of the Highway Authority, it is not considered that the proposal could be resisted on highway grounds.

Information received from NCC Highways indicates that this street is in a designated Permit Parking area, and that application could be made to the Senior Traffic Engineer by the residents in this regard.

Conservation Area

- 7.16 As no external changes to the property are proposed and with reference to the advice of the Council's Conservation team it is considered that the development would have a neutral impact on the Conservation Area.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In weighing all of the above factors, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable as the proposed use as self-contained flats will not cause substantially more harm to the amenity of the area than the permitted uses of the property as a family house or a shared house. The proposal would also bring a vacant property back into use, and would not prejudice the established character of the area. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the following conditions.

9. CONDITIONS

- (1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- (2) The refuse and recycling bin storage area shall be installed in accordance with the details specified on drawing ref. 2011/08/101 rev. B prior to the first occupation or bringing into use of the building, and thereafter maintained at all times.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with Policy E19 of the Northampton Local Plan.

- (3) Full details of facilities for the secure and covered parking of bicycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development hereby permitted. The approved facilities shall be

fully implemented prior to the development being first brought into use and retained at all times thereafter.

Reason: To secure the provision of adequate facilities in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

Informative notes:

Northamptonshire Police recommend the following security measures which if implemented will reduce the likelihood of crime and disorder occurring:

- Basement front door and ground floor front and back doors be upgraded to certificated PAS23-1:1999 and PAS24:2007 or WCL1.
- Basement and ground floor windows should be tested and certificated to BS7950:1997 or WCL4, and should incorporate key lockable hardware unless designed as emergency egress routes. Laminated glazing in ground floor and basement windows will reduce the likelihood of access being gained to the premises via smashed glazing.
- Individual doors to flats should be upgraded to PAS24:2007 standard.
- An access control system is required on the front door with electronic door release and entry phone linked to the flats.
- The gate leading down to the basement flat and the gate leading into the back garden from the Racecourse should both be fitted with mortice locks, and the rear perimeter should be upgraded so that access to the garden from the park is as difficult as possible.
- Details of secure bicycle storage can be found at www.bikeoff.gor/design or www.securedbydesign.com
- advice on secure storage facilities for wheelie bins can be obtained from Arson Task Force, and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue also strongly recommends the installation of sprinklers, contact Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue on 01604 797150.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

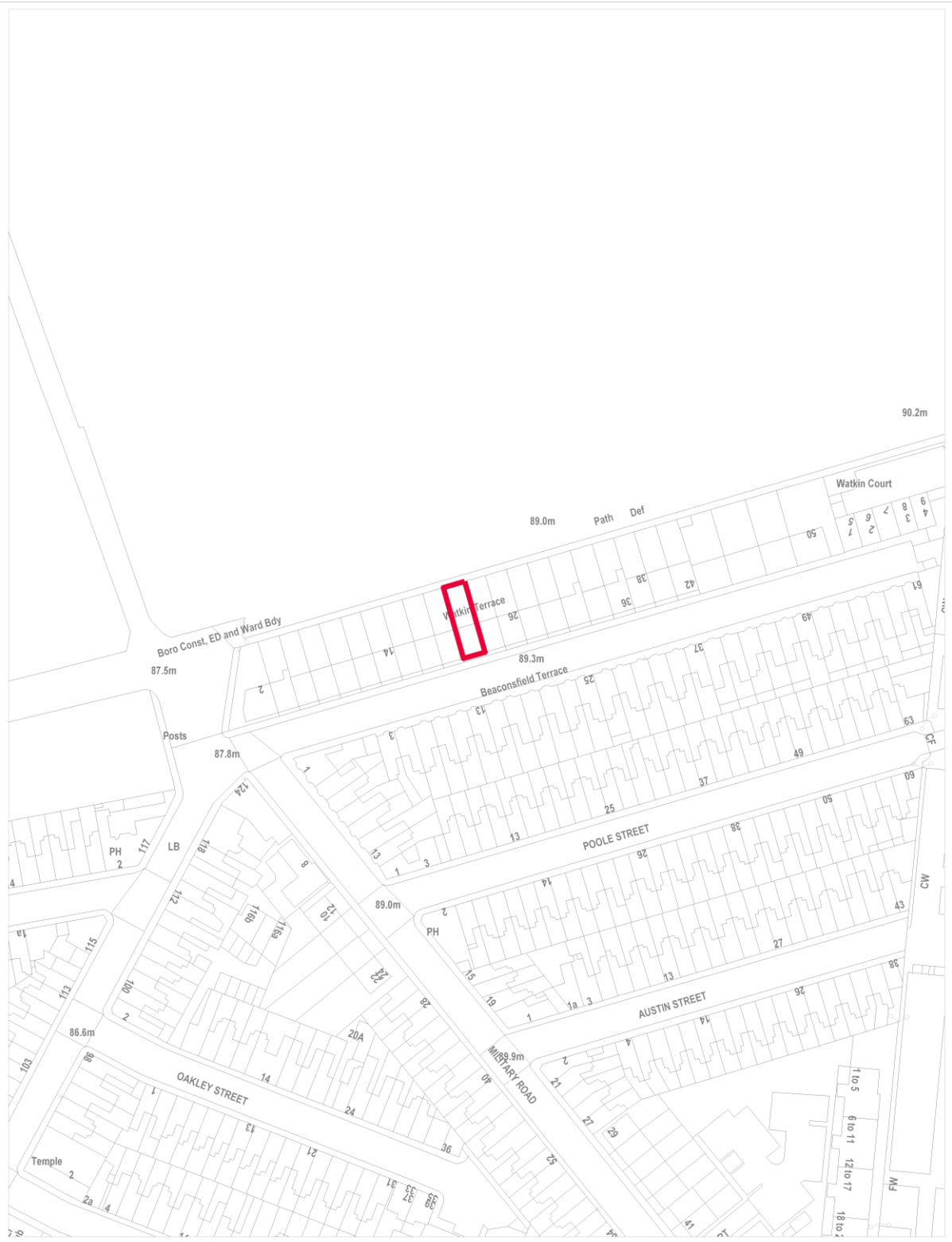
11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.

Position:	Name/Signature:	Date:
Author:	Ellie Williams	22/7/2011
Development Control Manager Agreed:	Gareth Jones	28/7/2011



Name: JST
 Date: 19th May 2011
 Scale: 1:1250
 Dept: PLANNING
 Project: LOCATION PLAN

Title
22 WATKIN TERRACE

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