



Planning Applications

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During the year the City Council received some 5,500 applications for development. Of these the Society examined some 400 and made representations on over 80 applications.

Tracking applications is not easy. Many do not fit conveniently into one calendar year, some are decided quickly while for others the process is protracted. Sometimes planning permissions are granted but never implemented. Sometimes planning refusals are appealed against and the appeals are allowed or dismissed.

Recent Government guidance about more effective community involvement in planning puts much more pressure upon developers to have meaningful "pre-application" discussions with the public before a planning application is made. All of this stretches the Society's time and manpower resources.

72 Coombe Lane, Westbury-on-Trym

In January an application was made to demolish and to replace the property with a block of flats. The house is a handsome one

with good gardens, similar to a number of others, and contributes to the overall quality of the area. Although not in a conservation area there was much local outcry about the possible loss of the building. The Society supported the argument against demolition. The Planning Authority refused the application and the developer then took the decision to appeal.

In October the Planning Inspectorate gave notice of the appeal against the refusal of permission. In a decision that was surprising but nonetheless welcome, the Inspector had recommended dismissal of the appeal on the grounds that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would therefore conflict with policies in the Local Plan.

McArthur's Warehouse

The City Council Development Control Committee considered a second application for the demolition of the warehouse and its replacement with a new-build scheme. Following a public inquiry, the first application had been refused by the Secretary of State in July 2002, on the grounds of adverse impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed building with its surroundings (*see the January 2004 Newsletter*).

This second proposal was a reduced version of the first, but one that the Society considered did not respond to the policies that the Secretary of State had set out in rejecting the first application. Despite opposition, the City Council Development Control Committee approved this second application subject to the Secretary of State not wishing to again "call in" the application.

In May 2004 this is precisely what did happen and another public inquiry was set for 2nd February 2005. This is not the end of the story. More later.



SS Great Britain: Will adjacent new development ignore decisions on urban design taken by the Secretary of State?