
Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	6th June 2012
Report By:	Head of Regeneration and Planning	Report No:	12/0030/IC Plan 06/12
			Local Application Development
Contact Officer:	David Ashman	Contact No:	01475 712416
Subject:	Erection of a dwellinghouse at Knapps, Houston Road, Kilmacolm.		

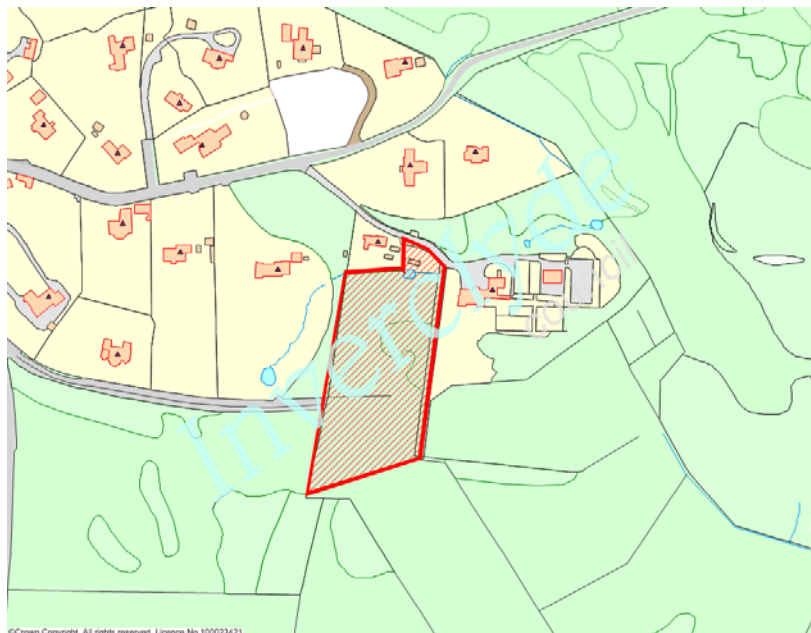
BACKGROUND

At the April meeting of the Planning Board consideration of the above planning application was continued for a site visit to allow Members to consider the proposal within its environs. The site visit was undertaken on 24 May 2012.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site extends to 1.33 hectares and consists of the western garden area associated with “Knapps” and a belt of mature trees to the south of the garden. The application site is immediately to the south of “Knapps Lodge” and to the east of “The Corrie”. It is screened from these properties by a mix of fencing and mature planting. Presently the application site is less well screened from the donor house and other garden ground to the east.

Although largely garden ground, the site is populated by a considerable number of trees, both mature and semi-mature, which are of generally good health. There is an existing narrow access to the site from the long driveway serving Knapps and Knapps Lodge and an existing private access track to the south.



PROPOSAL

The proposed dwelling would be located within the southern part of the application site within a part of the garden that is thinly populated by trees, most of which do not perform a significant landscape function. This part of the site has also been subject to recent storm damage which has resulted in the loss of some mature trees.

The proposed house is of a unique, bespoke design consisting of four linked circular sections of varying size with flat roofs. It will consist of three storeys designed to address levels differences within the site and the proposed access arrangements. The lower ground floor contains the garage, two bedrooms and the main entrance to the house. The ground floor (relative to the garden ground to the north) contains another bedroom, the kitchen, the living room and a drawing room/library. This level also provides access via an area of decking to the main garden ground which is located to the north of the house. The upper floor contains a fourth bedroom and a roof terrace.

The external walls are to be finished in natural slate in a horizontal arrangement with composite metal/timber window frames and a single ply membrane on the roof. Most of the windows on the southern elevations of the proposed dwelling are angled towards gaps in the tree cover to the south west and the south east addressing both views out from the rooms and concerns over the adequacy of daylight. Natural illumination of upper levels will be supplemented by glazing features within the roof space.

Access is proposed to be taken from the private access track which links the application site to Bridge of Weir Road. New metal entrance gates and a stone wall are to be erected at the connection to the access with the driveway finished in bound gravel.

The application is accompanied by a design statement, a tree survey and a landscape appraisal which details planting proposals within the site.

There is a history of previous development proposals on this site. Most recently in 2007 planning permission was refused for the erection of a house and the Council's decision upheld at a public inquiry. The Scottish Ministers agreed that the dwelling then proposed would have resulted in an unacceptable level of tree loss to create more light for the internal rooms of the house and to open out a view for the house across the countryside. The consequent loss of tree cover would have been to the detriment of the character of this part of the Conservation Area.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy H1 - Safeguarding the Character and Amenity of Residential Areas

The character and amenity of existing residential areas, identified on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded, and where practicable, enhanced. New residential development will be acceptable, in principle, subject to other relevant Local Plan policies.

Local Plan Policy H8 - The Character and Amenity of Residential Areas

Proposals for residential development that are acceptable in principle in terms of the Development Strategy of the Local Plan will still be required to satisfy the following development control criteria:

- (a) compatibility with the character and amenity of an area in terms of land use, density, design and materials used;
- (b) visual impact of development on the site and its surroundings;
- (c) landscaping proposals;
- (d) open space proposals (see also Policy H11 and guidance in Policy DC1);
- (e) proposals for the retention of existing landscape or townscape features of value on the site;

- (f) assessment against the Council's Roads Development Guidelines 1995 with regard to road design, parking and traffic safety;
- (g) provision of adequate services; and
- (h) accommodation of, in appropriate cases, the requirements of bus operators regarding road widths, lay-bys and turning areas.

Local Plan Policy HR1 - Designated Environmental Resources and Built Heritage

Development that would adversely affect, directly or indirectly, the natural or built heritage resources listed in Schedule 9.1 and where indicated, on the Proposals Map, will not normally be permitted.

Having regard to the designation of the environmental resource and built heritage, exceptions will only be made where:

- (a) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will not be compromised;
- (b) visual amenity and townscape will not be compromised;
- (c) no other site, identified in the Local Plan as suitable, is available;
- (d) the social and economic benefits of the scheme outweigh the total or partial loss of the environmental resource;
- (e) the developer has demonstrated that the impact of the development on the environment will be minimised; and
- (f) the loss can be compensated by habitat creation/site enhancement elsewhere, and where there are satisfactory arrangements to achieve this.

Local Plan Policy HR10 - Planting and Management of Trees and Woodlands

Inverclyde Council will ensure trees and woodland throughout Inverclyde are protected and enhanced through:

- (a) promoting the planting of broad leaved and native species;
- (b) protecting and promoting the positive management of hedgerows, street trees and any other trees considered to contribute to the amenity of the area;
- (c) protecting and promoting the positive management of ancient and semi natural woodlands; and
- (d) encouraging the planting of appropriate trees as an integral part of new development.

Local Plan Policy HR11 - Development Within and Adjacent to Conservation Areas

Development proposals both within and adjacent to Conservation Areas will be acceptable where they are sympathetic to the existing character, pattern of development and appearance of the area and the following matters are satisfactorily addressed, as appropriate:

- (a) siting and orientation of new buildings;
- (b) overall design and style;
- (c) scale of building, extension or alteration;
- (d) design details;
- (e) finishing materials; and
- (f) landscaping and boundary materials.

Local Plan Policy HR12 - Impact of Development Within Conservation Areas

When assessing Conservation Area development proposals (both within and adjacent to it) consideration will be given to the impact they will have on townscape and the wider landscape, especially when viewed from adjacent transport routes and vantage points accessible to the public.

Local Plan Policy HR15 - The Setting of Listed Buildings

Development will be required to have due regard to the effects on the setting of, and principal views from, Listed Buildings and shall be without detriment to their principal elevations and the main approaches to them.

Local Plan Policy DS5 - Promotion of Quality in New Building Design and in Townscape/Landscaping

The urban environment and built heritage of Inverclyde will be protected and enhanced through controls on development that would have an unacceptable impact on the quality of this resource. Quality in new building design and landscaping will be encouraged to enhance Inverclyde's townscapes.

CONSULTATIONS

Historic Scotland - No comments.

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services - Driveway gradient not to exceed 10%. Drainage Impact Assessment required. Separate approval of SEPA and Scottish Water is required for drainage arrangements.

West of Scotland Archaeology Service – No archaeology work required.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Edinburgh Gazette and Greenock Telegraph on 17th February 2012 as a development affecting a conservation area. It was also advertised on the same day in the Greenock Telegraph as there are no premises on neighbouring land and as development affecting the setting of a listed building.

SITE NOTICES

A site notice was posted on 17th February 2012 for development affecting a conservation area and affecting the setting of a listed building.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The application was the subject of neighbour notification, press advertisement and site notices. Six objections have been received including two each from the Kilmacolm Civic Trust and Kilmacolm Community Council. The points of objection may be summarised as follows:

- 1) Subdividing the grounds of Knapps will set a precedent to the detriment of the character of the Conservation Area (substantial houses in spacious grounds).
- 2) The upgrading of the access track connecting to Bridge of Weir Road and the introduction of lighting will be to the detriment of this part of the Conservation Area.
- 3) Possible loss of trees to the south of the proposed house, to the detriment of the Conservation Area.
- 4) The development will greatly change the visual impact on approach to Kilmacolm.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in the assessment of this application are the Local Plan, the Scottish Historic Environment Policy, the consultation replies, the letters of objection and the planning history of the site. The key determining issue is whether or not the proposed development will preserve or enhance the Kilmacolm Conservation Area.

The overriding characteristics of this part of the Conservation Area are substantial houses set within spacious grounds; tree cover dominates long views on the southern approach from Bridge of Weir with the occasional mansion and large roof punctuating this natural scene.

Adverse impact on these characteristics has potential to arise from any of the following, alone or in combination: the interjection of a new house, the effect of plot subdivision on the pattern of development and density of the area, or the visual impact of tree removal to accommodate a house and to provide amenity/views for its occupants. The proposed upgrading of the access track also requires to be assessed.



First addressing the design of the proposed dwellinghouse, different designs representative of the evolution of architectural thought and styles are a characteristic of the Conservation Area. There is no consistently applied uniform architectural theme. There is nothing in the pattern and historical development to suggest rejection of this proposal as an inappropriately designed house in the Kilmacolm Conservation Area. But is it the correct design for this specific site? The house will not be viewed from Houston Road and it would have no impact on this public perspective. Assuming retention of tree cover, from Bridge of Weir Road views would be limited to glimpses between the belts of trees to the south and west and the house would be disguised by the grey colour of the horizontally arranged slate walls. I am of the view that within this setting the house will blend with the landscape and is appropriately designed for the specifics of this site.

Moving on to address subdivision of the plot, Knapps is by far the single largest plot within this part of the Conservation Area. Subdivision would still leave the donor house with the largest grounds in the immediate locality. Furthermore the new plot will be typical of, and indeed larger than, most house plots in Houston Road and the house position is sufficiently remote from neighbouring houses to remove reasonable concern over impact on residential amenity. Concern expressed over the erosion of plot sizes and the impact on the Kilmacolm Conservation Area is valid. If plots are subdivided and more houses become visible and prominent then the special characteristics of the area will be lost; this does not apply in this case. As previously assessed, the visual impact of the house will be at most, negligible.

As highlighted in the previous Planning Appeal decision and much of what has been previously written in this assessment, the long term future of the tree belts within this application site are vital to the retention of a high quality visual edge to the Conservation Area. Tree removal can result from preparing a development platform for the house and vehicular access, creating a usable garden area and, possibly, from desiring an open aspect for views from the house. I am satisfied that the trees to be removed to build the house and the vehicular access and to create usable garden ground would have a negligible impact on the Conservation Area as they are contained to the rear of the main tree belt. The removal of trees to allow greater light into the plot and to create an open aspect for views from the house has been of significant concern in previous proposals. I am satisfied that the development now proposed has less potential to adversely impact on this aspect of the Conservation Area. Several trees have been lost as a

result of the storms of recent winters, naturally opening out the site to more daylight and likely resulting in less pressure for the removal of trees that remain. Key to this is the design of the house, which through the arrangement of the fenestration directs views towards the existing gaps in the tree cover to the south west and south east. Furthermore, the main garden area where most outdoor activities will take place is now to be located to the north of the house. I also note that the replanting scheme, as well as providing a more substantial natural barrier between Knapps and the proposed house, indicates re-planting within the existing tree cover around all southerly aspects of the house which will provide for the longer term screening from the public domain. Overall I am satisfied that the landscape proposals will protect and enhance the long term future of tree cover along this section of the village and Conservation Area boundary.

Presently, the track via which access to the site is proposed is discrete and unlit. There are no proposals as part of this application to either surface or illuminate it, and planning permission is not required to clear back scrub or drive vehicles along it. Upgrading has not been requested by the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services as a condition of granting planning permission and, as matters stand, there is no adverse impact on the Conservation Area resulting from this aspect of the development.

On this basis I am satisfied that the proposal accords with the relevant criteria within Local Plan policies H1 and H8 (safeguarding the character and amenity of residential areas), DS5 (promotion of quality in new building design and in townscape/landscaping), HR1 (designated environmental resources and built heritage), HR10 (planting and management of trees and woodlands), HR11 (development within and adjacent to conservation areas) and HR12 (impact of development within conservation areas).

In addition to considering the impact on the Conservation Area and neighbours, the Scottish Historic Environment Policy requires a planning authority to take into consideration any impact a proposed development would have on the setting of a listed building. The donor house, "Knapps", is a category B listed building but the combination of distance, location in the side garden and the existing and proposed soft landscaping satisfies me that the setting of the listed building is respected; the proposal complies with Local Plan policy HR15 (the setting of listed buildings).

Matters raised in consultation present no impediment to development and objections have been assessed against Local Plan policies. I am satisfied that there are no material considerations which suggest that planning permission should be refused.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted subject to conditions.

Conditions

1. That the driveway gradient shall not exceed 10%.
2. That the re-planting scheme shown in the "landscape appraisal" hereby approved shall be carried out in full during the first planting season following the commencement of construction of the dwelling.
3. That any of the trees and other planting which dies, is damaged, diseased or is removed within 5 years of planting shall be replaced in the first available planting season with others of a similar size and species.
4. That prior to their use, samples of the facing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
5. That prior to the start of construction, tree protection measures in accordance with British Standard BS 5837: 2005 shall be implemented and retained in place until the completion of construction.

6. That all surface water drainage from the site shall be treated in accordance with the principles of the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Manual (C697) (CIRIA 2007). Before development commences, details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority of the maintenance regime for the water detention areas.
7. That no trees shall be removed during the main bird breeding season of March to June.
8. That details of the entrance wall and gates shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the construction of this feature.

Reasons

1. To ensure that the driveway is capable of being used.
2. To ensure the provision of the proposed planting in the interests of retaining the long term character of the Conservation Area.
3. To ensure the retention of the proposed planting in the interests of retaining the long term character of the Conservation Area.
4. To ensure the appropriateness of the facing materials to the character of the Conservation Area.
5. To ensure the protection of trees on the site.
6. To control runoff from the site to reduce the risk of flooding.
7. In the interests of nature conservation.
8. To allow assessment of the visual impact of the appropriateness of these structures.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form and plans.
2. Inverclyde Local Plan.
3. Scottish Historic Environment Policy.
4. Consultation replies.
5. Letters of objection.



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