Reference No:	14/01403/FUL	
Proposal:	Amendment to previously approved 13/00688/FUL and 13/00739/ORN to include additional 2 flats at loft level, rear passenger lift and re positioning of previously approved 13/01099/FUL	
Site Address:	41 St Marys Street Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 4HF	
Applicant:	Mr Peter Audus	
Case Officer:	Julie Barrow, Planning Officer	
Parish:	Ely	
Ward:	Ely East	
Ward Councillor/s	Councillor Lis Every Councillor Richard Hobbs	
Date Received:	22 December 2014 Expiry Date: [P204]	

1.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 Members are recommended to **refuse** the application for the following reasons:
 - i) Core Strategy Policy EN5 and draft Local Plan policies ENV11 and ENV12 require development proposals within, or affecting, a conservation area to be of a particularly high standard of design and materials that will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. In addition, proposals which affect the setting of a listed building will only be permitted where they would preserve the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The shallow pitched roof in conjunction with seven poorly designed dormer windows is out of proportion with the existing building. The 'stuck-on' mock Georgian facade, featuring render on only the front elevation and door surrounds will create a building that will be visually dominant and pays no regard to the context in which it currently sits. The poorly designed roof is indicative of the contrived design with the mass of the side elevations featuring prominently in the street scene. The introduction of a dwarf wall with railing to the front of the site is inappropriate and unsympathetic in this location. The applicant has failed to make any assessment of the impact of the proposed changes to the permitted scheme on the Conservation Area and the numerous listed buildings on St Mary's Street and on the existing views towards St Mary's

Church and Ely Cathedral. In addition, the increase in roof height will block views towards St Mary's Church and Ely Cathedral when travelling from Cambridge Road. For these reasons the proposal fails to comply with Core Strategy Policies EN2 and EN5, draft Local Plan policies ENV2, ENV11 and ENV12, the East Cambridgeshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the NPPF which seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

- ii) Core Strategy Policy EN2 and draft Local Plan Policy ENV2 require development proposals to ensure that there is no significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers, and that occupiers and users of new buildings, especially dwellings, enjoy high standards of amenity. The contrived and awkward car parking arrangements now under consideration are likely to lead to an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the converted office building and the two new dwellings to the rear. In addition, the re-positioning of the two new dwellings has substantially reduced the amenity space available to the occupiers of the dwellings, to a level significantly below that set out in the Design Guide SPD. In addition, the movement of the new dwellings closer to the boundary with No. 43 will increase the perception of overlooking and the introduction of a terrace feature on the converted building will introduce an unacceptable level of overlooking and loss of privacy towards Nos. 43 and 45 St Mary's Street.
- iii) Core Strategy Policy S6 requires development proposals to provide safe and convenient access to the highway network and draft Local Plan Policy COM7 also states that existing rights of way should be protected. Core Strategy Policy S7 and draft Local Plan policy COM8 state that adequate levels of car and cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the Council's parking standards. The proposed changes to the layout of the car parking area and the reduction in the number of parking spaces to be provided per unit is considered to be contrary to these policies, leading to congestion and parking on the private access road to the detriment of all users and the character and appearance of the locality.

2.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

- 2.1 The full planning application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via East Cambridgeshire District Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <u>http://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/.</u> Alternatively a paper copy is available to view at the East Cambridgeshire District Council offices, in the application file.
- 2.2 The application seeks consent for the amendment to previously approved 13/00688/FUL and 13/00739/ORN to include 2 additional flats at roof level through the addition of a further storey on the building, the construction of a lift on the rear elevation and amendments to the exterior of the building to that approved. The changes proposed to the approved scheme also necessitate the repositioning of 2 dwellings on land to the rear of the site, previously approved by 13/01099/FUL.
- 2.3 The additional of an extra storey on the existing building at 41 St Marys Street will increase the height of the building from 6.6 metres to 9.5 metres with the applicant proposing to install a 'mock Georgian' facade on the elevation facing St Marys

Street. A sloping roof is proposed on the facade with the remainder of the existing flat roof beyond retained. A number of changes are proposed to the fenestration pattern on the front elevation including the modification of two window openings into doors and the addition of a number of pitched roof and flat roof dormers at roof level. The external lift shaft on the rear elevation will extend beyond the rear of the existing building by 4.5 metres, have a width of 4.8 metres, height of 9.6 metres and it will be centrally located.

- 2.4 The inclusion of the lift in the proposal has necessitated a number of changes to the layout of the car parking area to the rear of the building and the consequential repositioning of the two approved dwellings to the rear. The approved layout for the area included the provision of 10 car parking spaces six to serve the six units to be created in the converted office building, two to serve the two new dwellings to the rear and two visitor spaces. The revised layout is for the same number of spaces, albeit in a different layout, to serve ten residential units. The proposal therefore represents the loss of the two visitor spaces.
- 2.5 The rearrangement of the car parking spaces has led to the repositioning of the two approved dwellings to the rear of the site. These are to be located closer to the western boundary, reducing the size of the private amenity space to the rear. The small area of frontage to both dwellings is also lost.
- 2.6 The applicant proposes to use facing brickwork and render on the converted and extended office building with slate on the front facing roof slope. A glass canopy is proposed over the first floor balcony on the rear elevation. The applicant proposes to use Gault Blend facing brickwork on the two dwellings with a slate roof.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1

13/01099/FUL	Re-development of part of car park to rear and erection of 2 new dwellings	Approved	11.03.2014
13/00739/ORN	Change of use of existing office building (B1) to residential (C3) to form six flats		04.10.2013
13/00688/FUL	Construction of access balcony to first floor rear elevation of building, alterations to windows, doors and external cladding.	Approved	04.10.2013
12/00431/CAC	Demolition of existing external stairwells and garages and refurbishment of offices (Amendments to existing consent ref: 10/00408/FUL)	Approved	02.07.2012

12/00430/FUL	Demolition of existing external stairwells and garages and refurbishment of offices (Amendments to existing consent ref: 10/00408/FUL)	Approved	02.07.2012
12/00022/FUL	Change of use of the ground floor from B1 (Office) use to A1 (Shop) use	Approved	06.03.2012
10/00408/FUL	Refurbishment of Offices	Approved	14.07.2010

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

4.1 The site comprises a 1960's two storey detached office building, with car parking and garages to the rear. The building is situated on the south side of St Mary's Street, on a prominent corner location, within the development envelope and Ely Conservation Area. The facades of the building are partly finished in tile and white PVCu cladding, with facing brick. A vehicular access to the rear of the building is situated adjacent to the eastern elevation of the building, which also serves the dwellings in St Mary's Court, to the south of the site. To the east of the site is St Mary's Doctors Surgery, to the west is a pair of semi-detached dwellings. A terrace of traditional buildings are situated on the northern side of St Mary's Street, opposite the site, containing a mixture of residential and commercial uses. A number of nearby properties are Grade II listed buildings with views towards St Mary's Church and Elv Cathedral afforded over the existing building.

5.0 <u>RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES</u>

5.1 Responses were received from the following consultees and these are summarised below. The full responses are available on the Council's web site.

English Heritage – No comments received at the time of writing.

Local Highways Authority – Due to the on street car parking controls in the immediate vicinity of the proposal no significant adverse effect upon the public highway should result from this proposal. However, the tight built form, coupled with the need to reverse a significant distance to get out of some of the spaces may introduce a level of noise disturbance.

Arboricultural Officer – No objections.

Environmental Health – No objections. Advise that the applicant ensures the internal sound insulation is to a good standard to minimize any noise impact between the properties.

Waste Strategy (ECDC) – No objections following receipt of confirmation from the applicant that the bin store is large enough to accommodate the required number of

bins as per the RECAP Waste Management Design Guide. It will be the responsibility of owners/residents to provide two bins and to take any bins/sacks to the public highway boundary on relevant collection days.

Ely Society – The proposal involves an improved façade. No comment made on the rear cottages.

City of Ely Council – No concerns.

Ward Councillor – I wish to call in this application for determination by the planning committee. I believe the plans submitted enhance the street scene of St Mary's Street and Cambridge Road and should be approved.

Conservation Officer – The Heritage Statement submitted does not show that the Historic Environment Record has been consulted, does not contain an assessment of the Conservation Area and the applicant has not shown how he has come to this design solution or why he believes it is appropriate in such a historically sensitive location. No assessment has been provided to show how views to the cathedral and St Mary's Church tower have informed the design process.

From a conservation viewpoint the addition of a roof with two additional units within the space and the inclusion of the external lift could be achieved, subject to the correct design solution.

The neighbouring property is of a similar age and a pitched roof has been added at some point in the past. It would appear that the new roof will sit no higher than the neighbouring dwelling. However, when travelling from Cambridge Road the introduction of a pitched roof will block current views to the West Tower. It is likely that for this reason the current building was designed with a flat roof. As you move further along St Mary's Street the building moves back in the street scene and the tower comes back into view.

The introduction of 7 dormers does little to enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Of the buildings that have dormer windows in the locality, they are minimal in number and none are visually dominant in the street scene. Importantly they are of a uniformed style to complement the buildings. The proposed dormers appear overly large and visually dominant, drawing the eye to the roof of the building and introducing an incongruous feature into the roofscape of an otherwise attractive street scene.

In terms of overall design, the existing building is of its time in terms of architectural style and detailing. Whilst no-one would argue that the building is of architectural merit, it has a relatively neutral impact on the conservation area.

What makes Georgian architecture so aesthetically pleasing is the 'balanced' proportions of the façade and the relationship of the floor heights to the windows as well as the symmetry of the design. By the very nature of its 1970's design the host building is proportioned in such a way that traditional Georgian design features cannot be successfully achieved. It only serves to introduce a poor quality imitation.

The shallow pitch roof is not in proportion and whilst shallow pitches do often work on traditional buildings, the fact that the roof is flat at the rear does little to show that the applicant took a comprehensive design approach to the building. The use of render on only the front elevation is not characteristic of the built form in this area. The introduction of a dwarf wall with railings to the front of the site exacerbates the 'replica' feeling.

The proposal, in its current form, would cause substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings and consent should not be granted from a conservation viewpoint.

- 5.2 Neighbours 24 neighbouring properties were notified and the seven responses received are summarised below. A full copy of the responses are available on the Council's website.
 - Increased height of building would restrict open view of St Mary's Church and the Cathedral
 - The light between numbers 41 and 43 would be substantially reduced
 - Overlooking from the terrace on the west elevation
 - Reduction in value of neighbouring dwelling.
 - Adverse impact on access, highway safety and parking and turning
 - Overlooking towards dwellings in St Mary's Court.
 - Reversing from car parking spaces will increase noise and disturbance.
 - New design is unneighbourly form of development.
 - The enlarged building is not in-keeping with the conservation area.
 - The plans do not show the wheelie bin layout as agreed with the Council.

6.0 <u>The Planning Policy Context</u>

- 6.1 East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2009
 - CS1 Spatial Strategy CS2 Housing Density H2 S4 Developer contribution S6 Transport impact Parking provision S7 EN1 Design EN5 Historic conservation
- 6.2 East Cambridgeshire Draft Local Plan (pre-submission version) as modified

GROWTH 2	Locational strategy
GROWTH 3	Infrastructure requirements
HOU 2	Housing density
ENV 1	Landscape and settlement character
ENV 2	Design
ENV 11	Conservation Areas
ENV12	Listed Buildings
COM 7	Transport impact

COM 8 Parking provision

6.3 Supplementary Planning Documents

Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations Design Guide

- 6.4 National Planning Policy Framework 2012
 - 6 Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
 - 7 Requiring good design
 - 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

7.0 Planning Comments

The main issues to consider are the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and on the setting of the nearby listed buildings, residential amenity and highway safety.

7.1 Historic Environment

- 7.1.1 The application site is located opposite a number of Grade II listed buildings with a number of Grade II* listed buildings also close by. In addition, the site is within close proximity of St Mary's Church, a Grade I listed building, and is viewed in context with Ely Cathedral when travelling from Cambridge Road onto St Mary's Street. The site is also located in Ely Conservation Area and occupies a prominent position on the corner of St Mary's Street. In accordance with S.66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, a local planning authority has a duty, when considering whether to grant planning permission for a development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting. Similarly, S.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in the exercise of planning functions. The requirement to have 'special regard' or 'attention' to such matters therefore goes beyond mere assessment of harm.
- 7.1.2 Core Strategy Policy EN5 requires development proposals within, or affecting, a conservation area to be of a particularly high standard of design and materials that will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. In addition, proposals which affect the setting of a listed building will only be permitted where they would preserve the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. These principles are carried forward in draft Local Plan polices ENV11 and ENV12.
- 7.1.3 It is accepted that the existing office block is not of any architectural merit, however, it is considered to have a neutral impact on the conservation area and is not visually dominant or intrusive in the street scene. The building has the benefit of planning consent to convert it into six residential units together with consent to make external changes to the building to facilitate its conversion. The permitted changes go some way to domesticating the building and include the use of render and natural timber

boarding in place of the existing brown hanging tiles and large expanses of buff brickwork.

- 7.1.4 The approach taken by the previous owner of the site to introduce a contemporary look to the building was considered to be acceptable and the supporting text to Core Strategy Policy EN5 states that new development does not always have to mimic the past, and high quality designed schemes which provide a successful visual contrast with its surroundings may also preserve and enhance character.
- 7.1.5 The Council's Conservation Officer has raised a number of concerns regarding the proposed design and the use of a 'stuck-on', mock Georgian facade. Georgian architecture is considered to be aesthetically pleasing due to its balance proportions of the faced and the relationship of the floor heights to the windows as well as the symmetry of the design. This existing, 1960's office building is not proportioned in such a way that traditional Georgian design features can be achieved. The shallow pitch roof features seven poorly designed dormer windows and is not in proportion with the building. The dormers appear overly large and visually dominant and are not representative of the local architectural style. The use of render on only the front elevation is not characteristic of built form in this area and generally the use of dormer windows, stuck-on Georgian door surrounds and render create a building that will be visually dominant and pays no regard to the context in which it currently sits. The introduction of a dwarf wall with railings to the front of the site is also considered inappropriate and unsympathetic in this location. The fact that the remainder of the roof will be flat, to accommodate the lift, is indicative of the contrived design. The mass of the side elevation will be highly visible in the street scene and whilst it appears that the new roof will be at the same height as the adjacent dwellings (which are of a similar architectural style as the existing building), it will block views to St Mary's Church and Ely Cathedral West Tower when travelling from Cambridge Road to St Mary's Street. The Conservation Officer has suggested it is for this reason that the existing building was designed with a flat roof.
- 7.1.6 The applicant has failed to make any assessment of the impact of the proposed changes to the permitted development in the Design, Access and Heritage Statement submitted with the application. No assessment of the existing views towards St Mary's Church and the Cathedral Tower has been carried out and the poor design suggests that setting of the listed buildings opposite the site has not been taken into account, contrary to Core Strategy polices EN2 and EN5 and draft Local Plan policies ENV2, ENV11 and ENV12. Whilst the Conservation Officer considers that the harm caused to views of St Mary's Church and the Cathedral Tower may be less than substantial, the duty to consider S.66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 means that the harm caused to the nearby listed buildings and the setting of the conservation area is given significant weight in the determination of this application.

7.2 Residential Amenity

7.2.1 The addition of a further storey on the existing building to accommodate two residential units has had implications for the overall design of the development. In order to comply with current building regulations the applicant would be required to provide either a protected or external staircase for emergency escape purposes. It

is not therefore strictly necessary for a lift to be provided but the applicant has chosen to include an external lift shaft in the development on the basis that the flats are designed with the elderly/retired owners in mind. This element of the proposal has resulted in the rearrangement and reduction in number of the car parking spaces to the rear of the building. The layout of this area now appears contrived and it is likely that users will encounter difficulties when entering and exiting the spaces leading to vehicles reserving the length of the car park in order to exit the site. The noise and disturbance likely to be caused by this is considered to have a detrimental effect on the residential amenity of occupiers of the flats and the two dwellings to be constructed on part of the existing car park.

- 7.2.2 The aforementioned changes to the layout of the car parking area have also led to the re-positioning of the two dwellings to be constructed to the rear of 41 St Mary's Street, approved under 13/01099/FUL. In order to accommodate a number of parking spaces to the front of these dwellings, it is proposed to locate the dwellings approximately 4 metres closer to the western boundary, significantly reducing the size of the rear gardens. At the time the application for the two dwellings was determined it was noted that whilst the rear gardens did not meet the Design Guide standard of 50 square metres, they were commensurate with the rear gardens serving the dwellings in St Mary's Court and were considered acceptable in a location that is within walking distance of the city centre. It was also considered necessary at that time to restrict the ability of future occupiers to extend the dwellings or construct any structures within the outside space in order to protect residential amenity. The rear amenity space as now proposed is well below that set out in the Design Guide SPD and coupled with the loss of what was previously described as a 'home-zoned', landscaped area to the front of the dwellings, will have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the future occupiers of the dwellings.
- 7.2.3 The re-positioning of these dwellings will also bring the built form closer to the rear gardens serving Nos. 43 and 45 St Mary's Street and concerns have been by the occupiers of No. 43 that the two new dwellings would lead to a loss of privacy. It was previously noted that the rear dormer windows in the new dwellings would overlook the bottom portion of these gardens, in particular No. 43. Whilst it was considered that the existing boundary wall would go some way to mitigate this impact and that the orientation of the new dwellings is such that the private areas closer to the rear of Nos. 43 and 45 would not be significantly affected by overlooking, the movement of the new dwellings towards the boundary with Nos. 43 and 45 will increase the likelihood of overlooking and the boundary wall will not mitigate to the same extent.
- 7.2.4 The occupiers of No. 43 have also raised concerns that the light between No. 41 and Nos. 43 and 45 would be substantially reduced by the additional of a further storey on No. 41. The submitted drawings indicate that the finished roof level will be the same height as Nos. 43 and 45. The two buildings are however separated by a distance of approximately 8 metres with a single storey double garage serving No. 43 on the land. The orientation of the buildings is such that the proposed changes to the approved scheme would not lead to a significant loss of light and would not appear overbearing. No additional window openings are proposed in the side elevation facing Nos. 43 and 45 and the two window openings centrally located on the west elevation serve a hall and the area connecting the lift shaft and the main building. These openings would not be considered to introduce any

overlooking or lead to a loss of privacy. However, the terrace area proposed at roof level would afford occupiers views towards the private amenity space immediately to the rear of Nos. 43 and 45 and would result in a significantly detrimental impact on the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers.

- 7.2.5 Concerns have been raised by a number of occupiers of St Mary's Court that two additional flats at roof level will lead to overlooking towards the dwellings in St Mary's Court. As mentioned above, a terrace area is proposed for each roof level flat with balconies approved as part of the extant scheme at first floor level. The rear of the building is approximately 37 metres from the rear boundary of 10 St Mary's Court and approximately 41 metres from the rear boundary of 11 St Mary's Court. Views from the terrace will be interrupted by the external lift shaft and the two new dwellings to be constructed alongside the parking area and would not therefore be considered to introduce an unacceptable level of overlooking.
- 7.2.6 Core Strategy Policy EN2 and draft Local Plan Policy ENV2 require development proposals to ensure that there is no significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers, and that occupiers and users of new buildings, especially dwellings, enjoy high standards of amenity. The contrived and awkward car parking arrangements now under consideration are likely to lead to an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the converted office building and the two new dwellings to the rear. In addition, the re-positioning of the two new dwellings has substantially reduced the amenity space available to the occupiers of the dwellings, to a level significantly below that set out in the Design Guide SPD. In addition, the movement of the new dwellings closer to the boundary with No. 43 will increase the perception of overlooking and the introduction of a terrace feature on the converted building will introduce an unacceptable level of overlooking and loss of privacy towards Nos. 43 and 45 St Mary's Street.

7.3 Highway Safety

- 7.3.1 The Local Highway Authority has been consulted on the application and is satisfied that the on-street car parking controls in the immediate vicinity of the site will ensure that there will be no significant adverse effect upon the public highway. However, a number of concerns have been raised by residents of St Mary's Court that the proposed increase in residential units from 8 to 10 on the site will lead to congestion on the private access road that is to serve the new units and which currently serves St Mary's Court.
- 7.3.2 The loss of two visitor car parking spaces, within a scheme originally designed to incorporate a total of 8 residential units, is likely to have a detrimental impact upon the occupiers of the new dwellings and St Mary's Court with potential for parking on the access. As detailed above, this is in addition to an extremely cramped and contrived parking layout which may have the potential to discourage occupiers from using certain spaces. The approved scheme did not meet the Council's adopted parking standards but its close proximity to the city centre was considered to be a mitigating factor. The applicant has now proposed an area for cycle parking but the increase in units means that the parking provision is well below the adopted standard and the proximity of the site to the city centre cannot counteract this.

7.3.3 Core Strategy Policy S6 requires development proposals to provide safe and convenient access to the highway network and draft Local Plan Policy COM7 also states that existing rights of way should be protected. Core Strategy Policy S7 and draft Local Plan policy COM8 state that adequate levels of car and cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the Council's parking standards. The proposed changes to the layout of the car parking area and the reduction in the number of parking spaces to be provided per unit is considered to be contrary to these policies, leading to congestion and parking on the private access road to the detriment of all users and the character and appearance of the locality.

7.4 Other Matters

- 7.4.1 An objection has been received from a nearby occupier that the changes to the approved scheme will reduce the value of nearby dwellings. Any difference in property values, whether positive or negative, is not a material planning consideration and is not a determining factor in the application.
- 7.4.2 The applicant's agent has confirmed that the proposed bin store will be large enough to accommodate the required number of wheeled bins in accordance with the RECAP Waste Management Design Guide. The Council's Waste Strategy team has confirmed that this is acceptable and that no further information is required.
- 7.4.3 The applicant approached the Council prior to submitting this application with details of the proposal. He was advised by officers that the scheme was unlikely to be supported, in general terms, for the reasons outlined in this report. The applicant did not engage in the formal pre-application advice process but had he done so he would have been made aware of the issues that have arisen through the determination of this application.
- 7.4.4 The wider public benefits from the proposed scheme are the increase in the number of residential units from 8 to 10 and the benefits felt by the local economy during the construction phase and from the increased population in the area. Whilst these benefits cannot be disputed, they are not significantly increased from the approved scheme of 8 residential units and for this reason can be given only marginal weight. The benefits of the scheme would not be considered to outweigh the significant harm caused to the setting of nearby listed buildings, including St Mary's Church and Ely Cathedral and the wider Conservation Area, the significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity of the occupiers of the proposed residential units and nearby dwellings and the adverse impact on the private access and lack of adequate and useable parking provision for the development. The application is therefore recommended for refusal for the reasons set out at the beginning of this report.

Background Documents	Location	Contact Officer(s)
Application file -	Julie Barrow	Julie Barrow
14/01403/FUL	Room No. 011	Planning Officer
	The Grange	01353 665555
Application file - 13/01099/FUL	Ely	julie.barrow@eastcambs.gov.uk

Application file - 13/00739/ORN

Application file - 13/00688/FUL

Core Strategy http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/ local-development-framework/core-strategy

Draft Local Plan - <u>http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/</u> <u>sites/default/files/SD1%20presubmissiondraftlocalplanpart1.pdf</u>