

Application No: 15/2910N

Location: THE GABLES, BRADFIELD ROAD, LEIGHTON, CW1 4QW

Proposal: Extension and refurbishment to an existing former nursing care home and conversion into key worker accommodation.

Applicant: Ralph Murphy, Pantheon West

Expiry Date: 01-Oct-2015

SUMMARY:

The development would bring back into use a building that is currently vacant and in a poor state of repair to the detriment of the local area.

The proposal would satisfy the economic and social sustainability roles by providing much needed accommodation close to Leighton Hospital adjacent to an existing settlement where there is existing infrastructure and amenities.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact upon highway safety, amenity, ecology, drainage, landscape and design.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to Section 106 Agreement and conditions

DEFERRAL

The application was deferred at the last meeting of the Southern Planning Committee for the following reasons:

- Further information with respect to the size of bedrooms/kitchens, bin stores, parking, communal sitting areas, laundry rooms, cycle stores
- Consultation with Leighton Hospital
- A Committee site inspection to enable Members to assess the impact of the proposed development

These matters are dealt with in detail below but in summary:

1. Updated site plan drawing showing the revised parking/ increased numbers and relocated bin store has been submitted. This also shows the dimensions of the parking spaces.
2. The applicants have also shown detailed cycle store plan and elevations

3. They have also shown further detailed drawings of the bin store plans and elevations which has been relocated away from the site frontage
4. They have also enclosed a typical kitchen layout showing how this could be set out.
5. The bedroom sizes are as shown on the plans.
6. A letter explaining the applicants discussions with Leighton hospital have been submitted
7. Planning officers are also in the process of consulting the hospital. An update will be provided prior to committee.
8. The applicants have not shown any laundry room at present but can confirm that if the hospital require they we will add this into the scheme by potentially removing one of the bedrooms.
9. Applicant is willing to include in the Section 106 legal agreement for the possible new cycle link to the hospital is £10,000.

It is considered that these amendments / additional information have addressed Members previous concerns and accordingly the application is recommended for approval.

PROPOSAL

The application is for the conversion and extension of a former nursing home situated on the eastern side of Bradfield Road, Crewe. The development would effectively become a house of multiple occupation, aimed at accommodating key workers from Leighton Hospital, which is in close proximity to the site.

The application form describes the development as extension and refurbishment to an existing former nursing care home and conversion into key worker accommodation. The application also refers to the accommodation comprising 11 'cluster flats' and these are defined as several en-suite rooms grouped together in an apartment that shares a kitchen/common area. This would result in the creation of 51 bedrooms and seven kitchen/diners.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is situated on the north eastern side of Bradfield Road, Leighton. The site lies within the open countryside but is adjacent to a site that has approval for 400 houses (11/1879N – Land North of Parkers Road).

The building to be converted and extended is a two storey, 'L' shaped building, with a brick and tile finish. It is a former nursing home that has been vacant for some time but is in a reasonable state of repair.

The site is in close proximity to Leighton Hospital.

RELEVANT HISTORY

12/3771N Withdrawn application for residential development

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy:

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Of particular relevance are paragraphs 14 and 47.

Development Plan:

The Development Plan for this area is the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011, which allocates the site as being within the within Open Countryside.

The relevant Saved Policies are: -

- BE.1 – Amenity
- BE.2 – Design Standards
- BE.3 – Access and Parking
- BE.4 – Drainage, Utilities and Resources
- BE.5 – Infrastructure
- BE.6 – Development on Potentially Contaminated Land
- NE.2 – Open Countryside
- NE.5 – Nature Conservation and Habitats
- NE.9 – Protected Species
- NE.17 – Pollution Control
- NE.20 – Flood Prevention
- RES.5 – Housing in Open Countryside
- Res.9 – Houses in Multiple Occupation

The saved Local Plan policies are consistent with the NPPF and should be given full weight.

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

- SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
- SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles
- SE 1 Design
- SE 2 Efficient Use of Land
- SE 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SE 4 The Landscape
- SE 5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
- SE 9 Energy Efficient Development
- SE 12 Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability
- PG 1 Overall Development Strategy
- PG 2 Settlement Hierarchy
- PG5 Open Countryside
- EG1 Economic Prosperity

Other Considerations:

The EC Habitats Directive 1992

Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010

Circular 6/2005 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System

CONSULTATIONS:

Highways:

The proposal is for key worker accommodation for employees of Leighton Hospital which is approximately 600m west of the site. The development will include 51 rooms and 1 flat, and the amended plan 3775/201A shows 25 car parking spaces and cycle storage.

There are no parking standards for 'key worker' accommodation but it is similar to HMO accommodation which would require 1 car parking space per room. Although the proposal falls short of this requirement, it is considered acceptable for the following reasons:

- The combined numbers of car and cycle parking spaces equates approximately to the number of rooms.
- Leighton Hospital is approximately 600m to the west which, according to the Institute for Highways and Transportation, is an acceptable walking distance for commuters.
- There is a proposed footway/cycleway route along Bradfield Rd and Smithy Ln, from the development to the hospital for which the applicant is willing to contribute costs towards to mitigate car usage.
- Three parking accumulation exercises have been provided for a nurses home and for apartment developments which demonstrate that parking demand will not exceed capacity.

The applicant will enter into a s106 agreement to contribute £15,000 towards the costs of the proposed footway/cycleway.

Environmental Protection:

Recommend conditions/informatives relating to noise generative works and noise mitigation in the building.

Minshull Vernon & District Parish Council: The Parish Council considered the above application at its meeting on 27 July 2015 and the deadline for observations was 29 July. The Parish Council did object to the application, but cannot find its e-mail to 'planning' setting out the objections and the report lists no observations having been received from the Parish Council. Request that the Committee is informed on Wednesday of these objections which are as below.

RESOLVED: That the following observations be submitted to Cheshire

East Council in respect of planning application No. 15/2910N –

- (i) The plans contain insufficient detail;
- (ii) The application form differs from the plans in that the plans show 51 dwellings but the application form indicates that the application is for housing for 11 key-workers;
- (iii) Car parking is inadequate; and
- (iv) This represents over-development of the site.

REPRESENTATIONS:

Neighbour notification letters were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice posted.

At the time of report writing no representations have been received.

APPRAISAL

The key issues to be considered in the determination of this application are set out below.

Principle of Development

The site lies in the Open Countryside as designated in the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. The building in question is a former nursing home that has been vacant for some considerable time and the proposal is to refurbish and extend it to provide a house of multiple occupation aimed at 'key workers' at Leighton Hospital.

Paragraph 51 of the NPPF requires that local planning authorities should “*Local planning authorities should identify and bring back into residential use empty housing and buildings in line with local housing and empty hoes strategies and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase powers.*” Whilst this building is not the subject of a compulsory purchase order, it would involve bringing back into use a building that has been vacant for some considerable time.

Policy RES.9 requires that the conversion of buildings to houses of multiple occupation are acceptable subject to the provision of satisfactory living conditions for future residents, acceptable design, the proposal would not cause noise transmission or overlooking to neighbouring properties and that safe access and adequate parking are provided. The proposal meets the requirements of this policy and is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

Members had expressed concern about whether Leighton Hospital would support such a development. The applicant's Agent has provided the following statement

The client body has previously discussed the key worker accommodation at the Gables site with Leighton Hospital. The hospital need updated keyworker accommodation for their nursing staff and doctors. The existing accommodation needs modernising and this site/development would give the hospital the option of having privately funded much needed facilities.

The hospital are not in a position to formally support this site but once planning permission is obtained the client would open discussions again with the hospital.

Cheshire East council has also reported that key worker accommodation also includes many other services other than the hospital such as the police. fire brigade etc. Therefore the accommodation does not necessarily have to just cater for hospital requirements. However the client body really believes the hospital is potentially the best alternative and consider that if the hospital is not signed up for. The majority of the development they may discuss other potential uses for the site.

Commercially the client body has spent a great deal of money to obtain this permission

and believe the hospital would be the best use for the development. So much so that if this does not happen the client body may consider another use for the site and even submit another separate planning application.

Planning Officers have also consulted with Leighton Hospital who have stated:

A matter relating to our own residential accommodation is due to be discussed by our Executive Directors early next week (w/c Monday 16th November 2015). The outcome of this discussion will likely inform our views on this matter.

They have therefore asked if they can provide a response after this date. An update on this matter will therefore be provided prior to the committee meeting.

Sustainability

The National Planning Policy Framework definition of sustainable development is:

“Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations. Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world. We must house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices. We must respond to the changes that new technologies offer us. Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be worse if things stagnate. Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment”

The site is within very close proximity to Leighton Hospital where the developers are targeting the occupation of the building to staff working there (key workers). Whilst it would not be reasonable to condition that only key workers occupy the accommodation, it is likely that it would be most attractive to that group.

There are, however, three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy

an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The site is designated as being within open countryside and therefore not the first priority for development. It does however involve the redevelopment of an existing building that has been vacant for a considerable amount of time. Clearly the provision of accommodation would be of benefit as would the improvements to the building.

Trees and Hedgerows

The application is supported by a Tree Survey and Constraints Plan by a suitably qualified arboriculturist.

The Council's expert in issues relating to trees has assessed this information and is in agreement with its findings. These include the fact that the site contains trees comprising almost all being of the genus Cypress, all of which are considered to be low value Category C specimens in terms of the British Standard. Therefore they should not be seen as a constraint to development.

The proposal includes an extension to the rear of the existing building. The extension would be contained within the existing curtilage of the site and would not have any significant impact on the openness of the countryside or the landscape character of the area.

Subject to conditions relating to the landscaping of the site, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on trees and the wider landscape.

Ecology

The habitats on the site are considered to be of relatively limited nature conservation value.

No evidence of roosting bats was recorded during the submitted ecological survey, the survey was undertaken very late in the survey season, however on balance it is considered that roosting bats are not reasonably likely to be affected by the proposed development.

The submitted ecological assessment states that there are records of Great Crested Newts close to the proposed development site. There is a small pond present on site but this is of very low value for Great Crested Newts. It is considered that considering the poor quality of the pond and terrestrial habitat on site Great Crested Newts are not reasonably likely to be present or affected by the proposed development.

There are anecdotal records of grass snakes in the broad locality of the application site. The application site however provides only small areas of suitable habitat for reptiles It is therefore considered that reptiles are not reasonably likely to be present or affected by the proposed works.

If planning consent is granted a condition should be imposed to ensure the protection of breeding birds.

Design & Layout

The application involves the conversion and extension of this former nursing home. The refurbishment of the existing building would improve the character of the area as it is currently vacant and is beginning to fall into a poor state of repair to the detriment of the locality.

Having regard to the extensions, they are to the rear of the site, set well back from the road and would be barely visible from the street scene. The materials used would match those on the existing building as closely as possible.

Members had expressed concerns regarding the proposed bin storage arrangements. A bin store was shown on the site frontage, in which position it may have appeared incongruous, particularly as no elevational detail had been provided. However, this has now been moved adjacent to the side boundary of the site and elevations have been provided showing it as a brick structure.

Highways

The Head of Strategic Infrastructure was consulted on the application and raised concerns about the level of parking provision. The updated site plan has shown an increased level of parking provision as well as dedicated covered cycle parking. This also shows the dimensions of the parking spaces. In addition a Section 106 contribution of £10,000 has been offered towards the cycle link to Leighton hospital, where it is anticipated that the occupants will work. This has now addressed the highways concerns.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

The Framework includes a strong presumption in favour of economic growth.

Paragraph 19 states that:

‘The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth’

Given the countryside location of the site, consideration must also be given to one of the core principles of the Framework, which identifies that planning, should recognise:

‘the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it’.

Specifically, in relation to the rural economy the Framework identifies that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

‘support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings’

The economic benefits of the development need to be balanced against the impact upon the open countryside.

With regard to the economic role of sustainable development, the proposed development will help to provide accommodation for key workers at Leighton Hospital as well as bringing direct and indirect economic benefits to Crewe, including additional trade for local shops and businesses, jobs in construction and economic benefits to the construction industry supply chain.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The site is within walking distance of Leighton Hospital and the developers are targeting the staff there as occupants of the rooms in the building.

Residential Amenity

The extension would be to the rear of the site and would be in excess of 30 metres away from the nearest existing residential property. As such there would be no significant adverse impact on the residential amenity of the property. To the north east of the site, there is approval for a development of 400 houses. However, given the siting of the extension and the position of windows, in both it and the approved dwellings, there would be no significant adverse impact on residential amenity.

Adequate communal amenity space will be provided within the site to provide recreational space and bin storage.

Due to the proximity to the road, an Environmental Noise Assessment was submitted with the application. This includes recommended mitigation measures for the protection of residents from road traffic noise and a condition should be imposed requiring compliance with this mitigation scheme.

Should the application be approved a condition should also be imposed relating to piling operations.

Members expressed concerns at their last meeting regarding the sizes of bedrooms. The bedroom sizes are as shown on the plans and vary from approximately 12.7sqm to 23sqm. Members were also concerned as to whether any communal sitting areas would be provided. A typical kitchen layout showing how this could be set out has been submitted. This shows a kitchen area as well as a sitting area within this space. Members also queried the laundry room arrangement. The developer has confirmed that they have not provided laundry room at present but can confirm that if the hospital requires one they will add this into the scheme by potentially removing one of the bedrooms.

Conclusion – The Planning Balance

The development would bring back into use a building that is currently in a poor state of repair to the detriment of the local area.

The proposal would satisfy the economic and social sustainability roles by providing much needed accommodation close to Leighton Hospital and in close proximity to an existing settlement where there is existing infrastructure and amenities.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact upon highway safety, amenity, ecology, landscape and design.

The additional information now submitted, amended plans and section 106 contribution have now addressed Members previous concerns and the reasons for deferral and accordingly it is considered to constitute sustainable development and is recommended for approval

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to s106 agreement to contribute £15,000 towards the costs of the proposed footway/cycleway and the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement of development**
- 2. Approved plans**
- 3. Materials as stated in the application**
- 4. Submission and approval of a construction management plan including a construction compound within the site**
- 5. Restriction on hours of piling to 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm Saturday and no working on Sundays or public holidays.**
- 6. Compliance with the mitigation measures in the Noise Assessment**
- 7. Submission of a landscaping scheme**
- 8. Implementation of a landscaping scheme**
- 9. Submission of details of external lighting**
- 10. Breeding bird survey for works in the nesting season**

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning (Regulation) has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Southern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

