

Application No: 18/2112N

Location: WEBB HOUSE, VICTORIA AVENUE, CREWE, CREWE, CHESHIRE,
CW2 7SQ

Proposal: Listed building consent for proposed Change of Use and alterations of Webb House to form 18 Class 'C2' extra care apartments, proposed erection of a new three storey block to the rear comprising 36 Class 'C2' apartments, together with associated demolitions and extensions to provide a 'Wellbeing' Hub linking the two developments (Total 54 units)

Applicant: Arcam Development Management 1 Ltd

Expiry Date: 12-Sep-2018

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

The proposals relate to the development of an 'extra care complex' (Use Class C2) at Webb House (Grade 2) consisting of a total of 54 one and two bedroom apartments.

Webb House will accommodate 18 apartments, a "Wellbeing Hub" is proposed within the existing services buildings adjoining the rear of Webb House to provide resident facilities, and this will link to a new three storey building accommodating a further 36 apartments.

The residential re-use of Webb House would retain its historic character and significant features, notwithstanding that further design refinement is necessary to the proposed rear extensions. Furthermore, the new apartment building represents a good design solution and preserves the setting and special historic interest of the listed buildings.

It is considered that when viewed as a whole, and taking into account the proposed alterations to Webb House and limited elements of demolition, the development would result in "less than substantial harm" to the significance of listed building. However, in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF (para 196) this would clearly outweighed from the public benefits of securing a suitable a viable reuse to ensure the long term retention of this historic building.

Subject to the imposition of planning conditions and securing the amendments to the rear extensions, it is considered that the proposed works would not have a detrimental impact upon the Grade II listed building or its setting.

For these reasons, the proposals are considered to accord with the relevant requirements of local and national planning policy, and the application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

Delegate to the Head of Development Management in consultation with the Chair of Southern Planning Committee to resolve outstanding matters relating to the refinement in the design of new extensions to Webb House. Members resolve to APPROVE subject to conditions and the completion of a S106 Agreement

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

Webb House is a grade II listed building set back from Victoria Avenue. The property is set within extensive grounds which contain s protected trees on its frontage with Victoria Avenue, alongside the central driveway and western boundary.

The large grounds to the front of the building are mainly lawned and designated as informal open space under saved policy RT 1 of the Replacement Crewe and Nantwich local Plan. To the rear and eastern part of the site, there is a large tarmacadam car park, with additional car parking to the front of the Psychodrama and Clinical Office building to the west.

Webb House was originally designed as an orphanage, but was later converted into a British Rail training centre before becoming a specialist mental health hospital facility for the NHS. The building has been dis-used since 2008.

The main building and the two associated listed lodges at the property (South Lodge & West Cottage) were constructed in the early 1900s. The building is constructed from red facing brickwork to the main walls, with stone sills and features throughout, under a natural slate roof. A clock and bell tower is located centrally over the main entrance to the building.

A new build computer centre was constructed at a later date at the rear of the site adjacent to the northern boundary with the Chester to Crewe railway line more recent buildings including the “Psychodrama” and Clinical Office are located within the north western corner of the site.

Modern properties of Fairburn Avenue back onto the western site boundary. A public right of way (pedestrian/cycleway) linking West Street with Victoria Avenue passes alongside the eastern boundary, beyond which are dwellings of White Avenue.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposals relate to the development of an ‘extra care complex’ (Use Class C2) at Webb House (Grade 2) consisting of a total of 54 one and two bedroom apartments.

This application for Listed Building Consent comprises the conversion alteration and rear extension of Webb House into 18 apartments. A “Wellbeing Hub” is proposed within the former services buildings at the rear of Webb House. This will link Webb house to a new three storey building to the north accommodating a further 36 apartments.

The proposed development includes resident facilities, parking, landscaping and associated works. The “Well Being Hub” will provide treatment rooms, exercise studio, activity room, office, therapy pool and changing facilities, in addition to a communal lounge and library.

To facilitate the development the proposals include;

- Demolition of two flat roofed toilet blocks to the rear of Webb House adjoining the original staircase enclosures to enable the construction of two infill extensions;
- Two infill extensions to the rear of Webb House behind the west and east wings to add 4no two bed apartments;
- Construction of new central staircase to Webb House. The existing building has only two staircases each located at the opposite end of the east west corridor. It is proposed to have a central staircase close to the main front entrance from where

routes radiate to the east and west wings, the central communal lounge, wellbeing hub and new build apartments beyond;

- Demolition of rear support rooms to the former Webb House Sports Facility to facilitate development of the Wellbeing Hub/apartment block

Significant amendments have been made to the proposals during the course of the application, including the design of the proposed extensions to Webb House and in respect of the adjoining apartment block.

Planning application 18/2111N accompanies this application.

RELEVANT HISTORY

P91/0322 - Single storey extension glazed units and new amenities building. Approved

P92/0037 - Listed building consent for new amenities building, alterations and extensions to existing outbuildings including partial demolition – Approved

16th April 1992

P99/0426 - Certificate of proposed lawful use for a therapeutics mental health community. Certificate issued 24th June 1999

P00/0003 - Listed building consent for internal alterations, external link corridor disabled ramp, waste compound, alterations to openings and creation of paved area. Approved 2nd March 2000

P09/0209 - Listed Building Consent for upgrade to existing hospital accommodation. Approved 9th June 2009.

09/0754N - Upgrading of Existing Hospital Accommodation. Approved 3rd September 2009

POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy

MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD2 Sustainable Development Principles

SE1 Design

SE7 the Historic Environment

It should be noted that the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy was formally adopted on 27th July 2017. There is however policies within the legacy Local Plan that still apply and have not yet been replaced. These policies are set out below.

Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan

BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extension)

BE.10 (Change of use for listed buildings)

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

English Heritage: The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of your expert conservation advice.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL:

Crewe Town Council (comments to original scheme): Objects;

“Whilst the Town Council would welcome sympathetic development which retains Webb House and gives it a sustainable future, the current proposal does not respect the existing listed building or its setting. The proposed 3 storey block to the rear of the site is too large and over dominates the listed building. The proposed bungalows on the frontage will obscure views of the listed building from the road frontage and should be removed from the scheme. It is vital that the existing views of the building from the pavement are retained. The details of the extensions to the lodges should be sympathetic to the character of the listed building. The landscaping around the car parking areas should be of sufficient height to screen views of the cars, but no more than 2m in height when mature so as not to obscure views of the building”.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:

5 representations have been received from local residents raising the following points;

- Heritage Statement is incomplete (further addendums have been submitted)
- Although the New Build to the rear of the existing Main Building blends in without being a pastiche, the West Cottage proposal is much less successful as the new build and existing structure are immediately adjacent to one another and, being of similar size but different detailing, do not gel as well.
- Proposals should retain trees on Victoria Avenue side of Webb House
- bungalows detrimental to setting of Webb House
- Increase in traffic, leading to further deterioration in road surface of Victoria Avenue
- There is no public transport to and from the Town Centre

3 letters of support have also been received:

- Scheme will bring this building back into use and maintain it going forward having been vacant for over 10 years
- Secure building at risk

OFFICER APPRAISAL

This application seeks determination of whether works to a Listed Building would be acceptable. The principle of the proposed development is considered under the corresponding full planning application.

The property is Grade II and as such in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the Council shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses as per the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Policy

Policy SE7 of the CELPS states that, the Council will support development proposals that do not cause harm to, or which better reveal the significance of heritage assets and will seek to avoid or minimise conflict between the conservation of a heritage asset and any aspect of a development proposal by:

- i. Requiring development proposals that cause harm to, or loss of, a designated heritage asset and its significance, including its setting, to provide a clear and convincing justification as to why that harm is considered acceptable. Where that case cannot be demonstrated, proposals will not be supported.
- ii. Considering the level of harm in relation to the public benefits that may be gained by the proposal.
- iii. The use of appropriate legal agreements or planning obligations to secure the benefits arising from a development proposal where the loss, in whole or in part of a heritage asset is accepted.

Saved Policy BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions) states that development proposals for the alteration or extension of a listed building, or any feature of special or architectural or historic interest which contributes to the reasons for its listing must respect its scale, materials, colour, detailing and other significant features and must not detract from the character or setting of the building concerned. Similarly, Saved Policy BE.10 (Changes of Use to Listed Buildings) also requires that proposals should ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings would be preserved.

NPPF paragraph 196 notes that, *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”*

Impact upon the Grade II Listed Building and it's Setting

Alteration and Extensions to Webb House

The building has been well maintained and still contains many of its original features. Overall, the Conservation Officer considers that the care has been taken to ensure the proposal sympathetically works with the listed building, thereby reducing the amount of demolition of existing original structure and minimising loss of historic fabric. The Conservation officer has

therefore raised no objections to internal alterations to facilitate the Conversion scheme. The proposals would retain the historic character, significant features, and room arrangement of the original building.

Existing features including traditional floor finishes such as the parquet flooring, skirtings, picture rails and ornate architrave details, panelled walls and cornicing will be retained. The Conservation Officer has however specifically advised that a condition should be imposed to require that existing fireplaces and their surrounds are retained in that location and openings retained if no fire surround is in place.

In addition, the provision of the proposed central staircase is considered acceptable, particularly given that the original steel staircases at either end of the building are to be retained.

Careful consideration has been given to the detailing of the external alterations to the listed building itself, including the removal of the detracting toilet blocks and the proposed rear extension.

The amended proposals ensure that the proposed pair of rear infill extensions sited within recesses at either end of the rear elevation of Webb House reflects the existing window pattern of the listed building, together with a new lightweight, glazed facade to the staircase enclosure. In principle, their uncomplicated and simple design ensures that they will appear as subservient and sympathetic additions to Webb House.

Other than the glazed staircase enclosure the new extension would be constructed in red brickwork. The Design and Conservation Officer has advised that care is needed with the use of facing brickwork and also the finer detailing of the extensions should ensure that the extension be read as distinct additions to Webb house which also compliment the design of the new apartment building. It is considered that further refinement of their design is necessary including;

- The use of Copper cladding to frame the feature glazing
- Strengthening of parapet detail and potential use copper cladding
- Detailing on rear elevations to greater reflect the recessed form of the gables on the existing building

Nevertheless, these changes can easily be achieved by minor amendments to the scheme, and it is therefore recommended that the Committee resolves to approve the application subject to these amendments being secured and agreed by the Head of the Development Management and the Chair of the Southern Planning Committee.

It is considered that the proposals are of a layout and design which would not lead to any significant harm to the fabric of Webb House, nor from the demolition of the minor element to the north beyond the sports hall, as this is in poor condition and of little historic or architectural significance. The removal of the unattractive modern toilet block additions to Webb House will also better reveal the historic significance of the building.

A series of conditions are recommended to secure the retention of existing features and also details of proposed works including materials, new windows, doors and rainwater goods.

The proposed reuse, alteration and extension (although further design refinement is necessary) of Webb House would not have a detrimental impact upon the character Webb House (Grade II) or its setting.

New Apartment Building

In relation to the original proposals the Council's Conservation and Design Officers raised significant concerns regarding the impact of the new apartment building on the setting and character of Webb House given its design, scale and massing.

The new build proposal has been subject to a number of revisions including a reduction in its footprint and that it is of lower height than the listed building. The amended apartment building is also of a contemporary, modern design to ensure that it achieves a sympathetic contrast with the historic character of the adjoining listed building.

The simple rectilinear footprint of the amended apartment building would sit comfortably at the rear of the site, running parallel with the northern site boundary and the rear element of Webb House itself. The proposal footprint is almost identical to the width and depth of the existing building. The massing of the new block has been broken down into wings and deep bays, the proportions of which correspond with elements of Webb House. As a result the Conservation Officer accepts that new block would not over-dominate the listed building.

However, notwithstanding this, the Conservation and Design Officers have raised further concerns in relation to aspects finer detailing and facing materials proposed for the new building. These issues particularly related to the use of brickwork cladding for the structural frame of the building and the configuration of areas of glazing and grey cladding panels within the bays. To address these concerns further amendments have been made to the new building including;

- The Structural "frame" of the new block will be faced with copper cladding as opposed to brickwork cladding, ensuring a lighter-weight appearance and achieving an appropriate contrast with Webb House
- The configuration of areas of glazing and cladding of bays within the structural frame have been simplified, and the greater use of obscure glazed panels has helped to soften the overall appearance of the building
- Originally proposed balcony balustrades have been removed and replaced with clear scheme.

Conditions are recommended to secure a satisfactory quality of materials and their finishes, which is critically important for cladding, and also in respect of the specification for the framing of windows and areas of glazing.

Whilst of contemporary design, these amendments ensure that the new apartment building acts as an appropriate contrast to the listed building, ensuring that it can satisfactorily stand alongside Webb House rather than compete with it.

Heritage Conclusion

The residential re-use of Webb House would retain its historic character and significant features notwithstanding that further design refinement is necessary to the proposed rear extensions. Furthermore, the new apartment building represents a good design solution and preserves the setting and special historic interest of the listed buildings.

It is considered that when viewed as a whole, and taking into account the proposed alterations to Webb House and limited elements of demolition, the development would result in “less than substantial harm” to the significance of listed building. However, in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF (para 196) this would clearly outweighed from the public benefits of securing a suitable and viable reuse to ensure the long term retention of this historic building.

Subject to the imposition of planning conditions it is considered that the proposed works would not have a detrimental impact upon the Grade II listed building or its setting

For these reasons, the proposals are considered to accord with the relevant requirements of local and national planning policy, and the application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Head of Development Management in consultation with the Chair of Southern Planning Committee to resolve outstanding matters relating to the refinement in the design of new extensions to Webb House. Members resolve to APPROVE subject to conditions.

APPROVE: Conditions

- 1. Commencement within 3 years**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Details of material, finishes and specification of cladding**
- 4. Sample panel of materials on site**
- 5. Method of repointing and use of lime mortar**
- 6. Constructional details of new windows, internal and external doors for existing buildings**
- 7. A schedule of doors and windows to be repaired, altered, or replaced**
- 8. Cast iron, painted black rainwater goods**
- 9. Structural Engineers report to ensure stability of fabric to be retained during demolition and reconstruction**
- 10. Method statement for connecting extensions to the existing building**
- 11. Large scale drawings for construction of new stairs or balustrades within the existing buildings**
- 12. Retention of fireplaces and surrounds**

- 13. Scheme for installation of sound proofing and fire prevention measures within existing building**
- 14. Details of partitions to exercise studio/swimming pool and of new screen to stairs**
- 15. Details for repairing panelling in communal lounge once new openings have been formed**
- 16. Method statement for bricking up of openings and existing fenestration to existing buildings**
- 17. Details of new ramp access to existing building**

In order to give proper effect to the Board`s/Committee`s intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Strategic & Economic Planning, in consultation with the Chair (or in her absence the Vice Chair) of Southern Planning Committee, to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.

