

Application No: 20/2317N

Location: Beechmere, ROLLS AVENUE, CREWE

Proposal: Replacement of Beechmere Extra Care Facility building comprising 132 apartments with associated landscaping and reuse of existing car parking and site accesses.

Applicant: Advantage (Cheshire) Limited

Expiry Date: 07-Sep-2020

### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

The proposals relate to the development of an 'extra care complex' consisting of 132, two-bedroom apartments and a wide range of resident facilities. The proposed development is a replacement of the previous extra care complex which occupied this site since 2009 and which was destroyed by a fire last year.

The site lies within the Crewe Settlement Boundary where plan policies advise that new development is acceptable in principle subject to compliance with all other relevant development plan policies. The application site is located in a sustainable urban location with reasonably good access to services and facilities.

The development would bring positive benefits in importantly meeting an identified need for extra-care accommodation within the Crewe area through the replacement of the previous complex which occupied this site.

The replacement complex represents a good design solution and is of appropriate scale and design that will not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity, highway safety or flood risk, the proposal, subject to conditions, would not have an adverse impact upon trees, ecology and contaminated land.

The proposals are therefore considered to be a sustainable form of development in accordance with the Development Plan and national planning policy.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposed development, subject to conditions, is deemed to be in general compliance with the Development Plan and it is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted.

### **Recommendation**

**APPROVE subject to conditions**

## **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site relates to that of a former care home complex which was destroyed by fire last year. Residents of the care home have been temporarily rehoused while proposals were prepared to rebuild the facilities which are essential in providing high quality accommodation for the care and support of older people.

This extra care facility is provided under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract with Cheshire East Council.

The site lies within a residential area. It has two road frontages with Rolls Avenue to the south and Railton Avenue to the north. The current vehicular access is off Rolls Avenue and pedestrian access is available off both Rolls Avenue and Railton Avenue.

The adjacent properties mainly comprise of two storeys, semi-detached houses dating from the 1950's with more recently constructed properties of Royce Close adjoining the western site boundary. A small shop is located on the opposite side of Rolls Avenue.

The site has a significant fall of about 4m drop from the Railton Avenue frontage to the north, down towards the south-west corner on Rolls Avenue.

## **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The application proposes the development of a replacement extra care complex (Use Class C2) comprising of 132, two-bedroom apartments. The proposals include a wide range of resident facilities including "village hall", restaurant, gym, library, lounges and shared gardens.

The proposed development will be constructed on the existing slab of the original extra care buildings approved in November 2006 (P06/1122N) which was destroyed by fire in August 2019. Whilst the previous complex incorporated structural timber walls the new building is proposed to have a robust, masonry construction which will offer improved fire protection for the structure.

The scale and mass of the replacement care home is closely comparable to that of the original buildings which occupied the site. The development will utilise the existing car park and site access arrangements along with the existing underground services.

The replacement buildings follow the former floor plan that forms an 'H' plan layout, with two three storey wings along the street frontages of Railton Avenue to the north and Rolls Avenue to the south. A 4-storey atrium is located at the centre of the development will connect these two wings as well as accommodating the main entrance will form the hub of the scheme with a series of activity areas including fitness suite, library, lounge, village hall and hobby/craft room.

The on site parking court is contained by the 'H' plan on the eastern side of the site and the equivalent space on the western side of the central link will accommodate a communal garden/amenity area. A visitor parking area will be provided in front of the main entrance.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

P96/0399 - Outline Application for demolition of part Leighton Centre and erection of residential development – Approved 27-Jun-1996

P05/0006 - Outline Application for Extra Care Village for Older People Comprising of 129 Self Contained Accommodation Units and Car Parking and Lounge and Dining Rooms, Health, Welfare, Recreational, Care And Administration Facilities - Approved 08-Mar-2005

P06/1122 - Extra Care Village including 132 Self-Contained Supported Dwellings plus Lounge, Dining, Health Welfare, Recreational Care and Administration Facilities and Car Parking - Approved 28-Nov-2006

P07/0480 - Relocation of Substation on Extra Care Village - Approved 24-May-2007

P08/0640 - Amendment to P06/1122 Including Relocation of Kitchen Chimney Flue – Approved 03-Nov-2008

P08/0943- Amendment to Approved Application P06/1122 to Include Addition of Two Lift Over-Runs – Approved 01-Oct-2008

16/0791N - Certificate of proposed lawful development/use of existing extra care under the jurisdiction of Advantage. The existing shop is too large for purpose and is proposed to be split into a smaller shop and scooter store (all internal works not requiring planning permission). Opaque is proposed to be installed to the windows - these works require permitted development confirmation - Positive Certificate issued 22-Mar-2016

16/1088N - Demolition of existing store and provision of New Build Scooter Store in grounds of existing extra care facility. 21-Apr-2016

## **POLICIES**

### **Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy**

MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

PG1 Overall Development Strategy

PG2 Settlement Hierarchy

PG7 Spatial Distribution of Development

SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD2 Sustainable Development Principles

SE1 Design

SE2 Efficient use of land

SE 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

SE 4 The Landscape

SE 5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

SE 6 Green Infrastructure  
SE 13 Flood Risk and Water Management  
CO 1 Sustainable Travel and Transport  
CO 4 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments  
SC 1 Leisure and Recreation  
SC 3 Health and Well Being  
SC 4 Residential Mix  
SC 5 Affordable Homes  
IN 1 Infrastructure

### **Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan**

NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats)  
NE.9 (Protected Species)  
NE.20 (Flood Prevention)  
BE.1 (Amenity)  
BE.3 (Access and Parking)  
BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)  
RT.3 (Provision of Recreational Open Space and Children's Playspace in New Housing Developments)  
TRAN.3 (Pedestrians)  
TRAN.5 (Cycling)

### **Other Material Considerations**

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

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

### **CONSULTATIONS**

**United Utilities:** No objections subject to conditions relating to foul and surface water drainage.

**Flood Risk:** No objection

**Environmental Protection:** No objections subject to conditions relating to: Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure, contaminated land, provision of Ultra Low Emission Boilers and details of external lighting.

**Highways:** No objection subject to a condition requiring approval of a Construction Management Plan (CMP)

**Housing:** No objection

**Public Rights of Way:** No objection

**Cheshire Fire Service:** No objection. Future consideration will be given to details of Building Regulations submission for the development.

## **VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL**

**Crewe Town Council:** Comments as follows;

- *Crewe Town Council welcomes the proposal and looks forward to the early completion of the project. In view of the tragic past history we welcome the proposed incorporation of a sprinkler system in the re-build and that it will be of traditional masonry construction. We would like assurance that all possible fire prevention measures have been incorporated, including closing off the roof voids, and that any lessons learned from the fire investigation will be applied.*
- *Charging points for electric vehicles should be provided.*

## **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

4 representations have been received in support of the development;

- Area needs their neighbours back; after the fire affected so many lives and destroyed their homes they deserve to have it back. Also the local community will benefit from going back to normal.
- Eager to see Beechmere rebuilt and for residents to move back in to a safer building

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of development**

The site lies within the Crewe settlement boundary and an established residential area located approximately a mile from the centre of Crewe. The development therefore occupies a sustainable urban location and the principle of residential development is acceptable, subject to adherence with all other relevant local plan policies.

### **Housing**

The Council's Housing Officer has advised that there is an identified need for extra-care accommodation within the Crewe area, and the replacement of the scheme will go some way to address the current shortfall in accommodation.

The proposed "Extra Care Housing" is accommodation designed with the needs of frailer, older people in mind. In addition, a wide range of facilities are provided within the complex to meet the varying needs of residents, and importantly the availability of domestic support and personal care will be provided by on-site staff.

The application confirms that 73% of the proposed apartments (132 units) within the replacement complex will be provided as affordable units, including shared ownership (21 units) and rented accommodation (75 units). This significantly exceeds the requirements of CELPS Policy SC5 which requires that 30% of units within residential development to be affordable. The applicant has also confirmed that tenant occupancy will be for over 60's only as was the case for the original complex.

Furthermore, the development would importantly offer more choice for residential accommodation for the elderly in the area. The Government's formally adopted National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states under Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessments paragraph 21:

'Housing for older people, advises as follows:

*"The need to provide housing for older people is critical given the projected increase in the number of households aged 65 and over accounts for over half of the new households (Department for Communities and Local Government Household Projections 2013). The age profile of the population can be drawn from Census data. Projection of population and households by age group should also be used. Plan makers will need to consider the size, location and quality of dwellings needed in the future for older people in order to allow them to live independently and safely in their own home for as long as possible, or to move to more suitable accommodation if they so wish"*

The majority of older people who are looking to move home in later life are downsizing from a larger family home. Hence the need to deliver a range of choice in terms of type and tenure that will enable them to make such a move. The proposed development will contribute to the provision of such a choice and therefore falls within the spectrum of accommodation cited in the NPPG and will meet a need for specialised accommodation for older people which weights in favour of the proposal.

### **Siting and design**

The importance of securing high quality design is specified within the NPPF and paragraph 124 states that:

*'The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this'*

This objective is supported by Policy SE1 of the CELPS, which sets out the design criteria for new development and states that development proposals should make a positive contribution to their surroundings.

The Design Officer recognises the need for the replacement of the original complex on the site and the proposals are therefore essentially an updating of the previous scheme. However it is considered that the re-working and updating of the scheme is well-handled and the re-use of the existing slab and other elements such as the boundary fencing are not only economically sensible but have sustainable benefits as well.

The replacement building occupies the same footprint of the former complex and forms an 'H' building plan with two, three-storey long wings alongside the street frontages on Railton Avenue to the north and Rolls Avenue to the south. These are set back from the road frontages and thereby ensure the scheme respects the existing building lines of the adjacent roadside properties.

The scale and massing of the development closely follows that of the previous scheme which recently occupied the site. The massing of the building is reduced through the longer wings incorporating a varied roof line and hipped, gable ends.

Amended plans have secured recessed window details, with vertical brick bonds which add interest and depth to the elevations of the building. The elevations of building incorporate clean lines and a marked verticality as a result of the changes in materials and the portrait glazing. Although the specification of facing materials will be controlled through a condition, the proposed overall palette (brick, render, grey tile, PPC aluminium) is acceptable.

Furthermore, the proposed relief to the elevations along with the variations in the materials helps to create depth and articulation. In particular the projecting four-storey central section (Atrium) signposts the entrance to the development, and provides the building a satisfactory street presence as well as acting as a focal point from the southern approach to the site from Frank Webb Avenue.

In addition, the design and appearance of bin storage facilities have been enhanced. Amended details propose that the structures are faced with blackened hardwood timber cladding with a planted wildflower roof on top. The use of these materials softens the look and feel of these elements within the car park and enhances the landscape and biodiversity provision in the courtyard space.

In summary, it is considered that the overall approach for the replacement care home complex and represents a good design solution that is of satisfactory character and appearance in this location and in keeping with the surrounding street scene. It meets the Council's aspirations for this site and subject to the use of appropriate materials, which can be secured by condition. The development complies with Policies SE1, SD1 and SD2 in relation to the design of the development.

## **Amenity**

Saved Policy BE.1 of the Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan requires consideration to be given to the occupiers of both neighbouring properties and the future occupants of the site with regard to impact on privacy, loss of light, visual intrusion and pollution.

As a general indication, and whilst each case should be judged on its own merits, the Council's Backland Development SPD states that in the case of flats a separation distance of 30m should be achieved between principal elevations with windows to first floor habitable rooms. In addition the SPD also sets out that separation distances dwellings should be 21m metres between principal elevations and 13.5 metres should be allowed between a principal elevations with window a blank elevation.

The proposed buildings will be sited approximately 23m away from the opposing neighbours on Railton Avenue to the north and between 23- 38m with the facing properties on the opposite side of Rolls Avenue. Whilst the proposal does not fully meet current separation standards, it is however sited on the same footprint as the previous complex and closely comparable to the scale of the former development on this site.

The proposals have also been amended to include hipped gables at the eastern and western ends of the complex and a stairwell (Stair 2) has been stepped back to the original position on the previous building footprint to maintain the separation distance with No.6 Royce Close.

This ensures that the massing and visual impact of the buildings on neighbouring properties at Royce Close and Railton Road has no appreciably greater impact on residential amenity. In addition windows within the flank walls of the complex serving stairways/non-habitable accommodation will be obscure glazed to avoid overlooking adjoining residential properties on the eastern and western sides of the development.

It is therefore considered that the development will not have a significantly increased impact on neighbouring amenity by means of loss of privacy, overshadowing or overbearing impact when compared to the previous situation on this site. As a result it is not considered that the proposal would cause significant harm to living conditions of neighbouring properties.

With regards to the amenities of future occupiers of the development, as part of the extensive range of resident facilities, outdoor space is provided in the form of communal gardens, which is a typical arrangement to serve the occupiers of care facilities. Furthermore there is extensive Public Open Space and footpath network along Leighton Brook to the south the site is less than 60m away which is a reasonable distance for future occupiers to walk to and utilise.

The proposed development is considered to comply with Policy BE.1 of the C&NLP.

## **Landscape**

There is some existing vegetation cover on the existing site including semi mature trees, hedges and shrub planting.

An Arboriculture Impact Assessment and revised landscape plans and planting proposals have been submitted to address concerns originally raised by the Landscape Officer. Whilst the Landscape Officer accepts that the proposals now clarify vegetation to be retained, it is considered that a fully specified landscape scheme should be provided to include the composition of each individual planting area.

It is therefore recommended that conditions are imposed to secure the approval and implementation of a fully detailed landscaped scheme

## **Trees**

To address concerns raised by the Tree Officer an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and tree protection proposals has been submitted. The Tree Officer has advised that the proposals for vegetation removal and retention have now been clarified and show some existing tree and hedge cover would be retained.

Whilst protective measures are shown for retained trees on the submitted Trees Constraints Plan, the protective fencing does not extend to protect retained boundary hedgerows. On this basis and in addition to an implementation condition for the tree protection scheme, it is



recommended that a further condition is imposed requiring a scheme for the protection of the boundary hedgerows.

### **Nature Conservation**

It is proposed to integrate brick fronted bird boxes and bat boxes within the external brick leaf of the building. The Council's Ecologist has advised that the placement of these around the building will need to follow specialist ecologist advice and direction, to ensure nesting habits and flight patterns are not hindered.

The applicant has advised that an ecology survey is currently being completed, which will include the proposed strategy for the installation of bird and bat boxes. A condition is therefore recommended to secure the submission of an ecology and implementation of its recommendations.

### **Highways**

This proposal is a direct replacement for the previous extra care home facility which occupied this site. The proposed access and parking facilities replicate the previous arrangements and, together with the proposed addition of covered, cycle parking facilities comprising a total of 24 storage racks. The proposed on-site parking provision of 73 spaces is considered sufficient to meet staff, visitor and resident needs.

The anticipated level of traffic movements generated by the development and the use of the site access would not result in any adverse impact on the local highway network. It is therefore considered that the proposals are acceptable from a highway and transport perspective.

The Highway Engineer has raised no objection subject to a condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan to mitigate the highway impact of activities and vehicle movements associated with the construction of the development. A condition is also recommended requiring full details of the design and appearance of the covered cycle storage facility.

### **Flood Risk/Drainage**

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 according to the Environment Agency Flood Maps. From the conclusions of the submitted Flood Risk Assessment it is considered that the development would be sustainable in terms of flood risk.

Details of site drainage arrangements have been agreed by the applicants Drainage Consultant with the Council's Flood Risk Team, including confirmation that there is no alteration to the original surface water run-off rates from the site. As a result no objection is raised by the LLFA.

The scheme will utilise the existing drainage system serving the site which is a separate foul and storm network with existing connections to the site from Rolls Avenue. In these circumstances, and notwithstanding the consultation response of United Utilities, it is not considered that planning conditions are necessary to require further drainage details to be provided.

## **Other matters**

Amended plans have specified the provision of four, dual electric vehicle charging points with the parking area, and the Environmental Protection Officer has advised that this is acceptable to serve the complex. A condition is recommended to ensure the provision and subsequent retention of charging infrastructure.

The Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the geo-environmental report submitted in support of the above planning application (Report Ref: IN20666 CL 001, Subadra Consulting Ltd., August 2020). The report presents combined Phase I and Phase II site investigations. The Phase I aspects of the report are considered acceptable and include consideration of recent events at the site. However it is advised that a condition should be imposed requiring an updated Phase II ground investigation and risk assessment to be submitted to ensure complete analysis is provided of on-site contaminants which were found, and also confirms soft landscaping areas are remediated to enable potential use as growing areas /vegetable patches etc.

## **Planning Balance**

The site lies within the Crewe settlement limit where plan policies advise that new development is acceptable in principle subject to compliance with all other relevant development plan policies. The application site is located in a sustainable urban location with reasonably good access to services and facilities.

The development would bring positive benefits in importantly meeting an identified need for extra-care accommodation within the Crewe area through the direct replacement of the previous complex which occupied this site that was destroyed by fire last year.

The replacement complex represents a good design solution and is of appropriate scale and design that will not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity, highway safety or flood risk. The proposal, subject to conditions, would not have an adverse impact upon trees, ecology and contaminated land.

The proposals are therefore considered to be a sustainable form of development in accordance with the Development Plan and national policy.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposed development, subject to conditions, is deemed to be in general compliance with the Development Plan and it is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**APPROVE** Subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard Time**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans**

- 3. Details of materials and finishes**
- 4. Tree Protection**
- 5. Hedgerow protection scheme**
- 6. Provision of Electric Vehicle infrastructure**
- 7. Provision of Ultra Low Emission Boilers**
- 8. Details of external Lighting**
- 9. Obscure glazing to windows in flank walls of buildings**
- 10. Contaminated land – submission of updated phase 2 report - prior to commencement of development**
- 11. Contaminated land – submission of a verification report**
- 12. Contaminated land – works to stop if any unexpected contamination is discovered on site**
- 13. Contaminated land imported soil**
- 14. Submission of Landscape scheme**
- 15. Implementation of the landscaping scheme**
- 16. Implementation of Bird and Bat boxes in accordance with ecological survey**
- 17. Submission, approval and implementation of a Construction Management Plan**
- 18. Details of covered cycle storage and provision before first occupation**
- 19. Design details of Bin Stores and provision before first occupation**
- 20. Occupation limited to residents over 60 years**
- 21. Condition to Secure the Affordable Housing provision as part of the development**

**In order to give proper effect to the Board`s/Committee`s intent and without changing the substance of its decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning (Regulation) in consultation with the Chair (or in their absence the Vice Chair) to correct any technical slip or omission in the resolution, before issue of the decision notice**

