

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE AGENDA

Winchester City
Council
Planning Department
Development Control

TEAM MANAGER
SIGN OFF SHEET

Committee Decision

Case No:	08/01331/FUL	Valid Date	10 July 2008
W No:	06564/19	Recommendation Date	2 September 2008
Case Officer:	Nick Parker	8 Week Date	9 October 2008
		Committee date	1 October 2008
Recommendation:	Application Refused	Decision:	Committee Decision

Proposal:	Demolition of redundant extensions to existing care home; renovation of original building and construction of 2 and 3 storey extensions to provide specialist, dementia and general care accommodation for the frail elderly and associated developments
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Site:	St Cross Grange Residential Care Home 140 St Cross Road Winchester Hampshire SO23 9RJ
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Open Space Y/N	Legal Agreement	S.O.S	Objections	EIA Development	Monitoring Code	Previous Developed Land
N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y

DELEGATED ITEM SIGN OFF		
	REFUSE for the reason(s) listed	
	Signature	Date
CASE OFFICER		
TEAM MANAGER		

AMENDED PLANS DATE:-

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Item No: 1
Case No: 08/01331/FUL / W06564/19
Proposal Description: Demolition of redundant extensions to existing care home; renovation of original building and construction of 2 and 3 storey extensions to provide specialist, dementia and general care accommodation for the frail elderly; and associated developments
Address: St Cross Grange Residential Care Home 140 St Cross Road Winchester Hampshire SO23 9RJ
Parish/Ward: Winchester Town
Applicants Name: Greensleeves Homes Trust
Case Officer: Nick Parker
Date Valid: 10 July 2008
Recommendation: Application Refused

General Comments

This application is reported to Committee because of the number of letters of support received, contrary to the officer's recommendation.

Site Description

The application site consists of a large care home building that is positioned towards the rear of the site, some way back from St Cross Road and in an elevated position higher than the road level. The building relates to a mid-late 19th Century building, and is of red brick construction with blue brick dressings and a steeply pitched tile roof with overhanging gables, decorative bargeboards, dormers and ornate chimney stacks. The building has been extended on its north side with an area of new accommodation of two storeys in a similar architectural style. Further large extensions to the original building exist at the rear and east of the main house. The care home currently provides 29-bed accommodation for the elderly. Within the grounds to the north of the main house there is a new block of three storey flats, separated from the nursing home by the sweeping drive from St Cross Road.

The area in front of the main building consists of a large area of grassed lawn that slopes down towards the road where a number of large mature trees form the boundary of the site. These trees are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (ref: TPO.02056). The site is bounded to the south and west by residential development situated in Grange Close and Grange Road. The western boundary rises steeply and a number of mature trees form the boundary with the neighbouring residential properties. A number of mature trees are also located towards the south of the site.

The site lies within a conservation area.

Proposal

It is proposed to enlarge the existing nursing home to provide a total of 62 beds that would provide specialist Alzheimer's, dementia and general care accommodation for the frail elderly. The new accommodation would provide a mix of standard care beds and EMI

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(Elderly Mentally ill) care beds in varying environments tailored to infirmity, with a dedicated ESMI (Elderly Severely Mentally ill) unit for the severest of cases. The proposals involve the demolition of the existing two storey extension to the north and replacement with a new two storey extension on a similar footprint. A further extension of three storeys is proposed to the south and west of the original house. The proposals also involve the provision of new communal areas, including raised, decked areas to the rear and a secure garden contained within the ground floor of the development. The original building will be retained and upgraded.

Relevant Planning History

05/00304/FUL - Three storey block of 14 no. residential flats comprising 3 no. one bedroom units, 7 no. two bedroom units and 4 no. three bedroom units; bin/cycle store; associated car parking and landscaping and new access road - Permitted -11/04/2005.

Consultations

Highways: No objection

Conservation: Objection:

"The proposed extensions would result in the urbanisation of what is currently still part of the "country" approach to Winchester from the south, to the detriment of the character of this part of the city. The proposals would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area".

Trees – Objection:

"Further information required to fully assess impact on trees including an arboricultural impact assessment and method statement. In the absence of this information the application cannot be supported at present".

Drainage - No objection.

Environmental Protection - No objection, subject to conditions.

Environment Agency - No objection.

Southern Water – No objection

HCC Ecology - Further surveys and impact assessment of the development on protected species and ecology is required. It must be ensured that ecological enhancements (above and beyond mitigation or compensation) are incorporated into the development, in line with PPS 9.

Representations

City of Winchester Trust

The Trust is concerned that the very large extensions leave little amenity land for residents. Overall, it is considered an ingenious and imaginatively detailed scheme but the Trust also has concerns over the lack of detail of the proposed architectural treatment

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and concern over the impact of the three storey block on the right boundary on the residents of Grange Road and wonders if it should be reduced to two storey.

57 letters of objection received, for the following reasons:

- Size of extensions lead to the overdevelopment of the site, creating a large institution that is out of keeping with the scale of the buildings and the historic character of the surrounding area.
- Loss of significant amount of trees that would open site up and create unacceptable overlooking into neighbouring properties.
- Tree loss would damage the wildlife and biodiversity of area.
- Extensions and tree loss lead to overshadowing and loss of light to neighbouring properties.
- Fears that the large expansion would lead to a significant increase in vulnerable patients that would cause disturbance to neighbours and in particular children. Fears that the severity of mental disorders housed here could increase in the future without control.
- Increased pressure on local infrastructure creating problems
- Increased traffic using site that has poor access and at anti-social periods of the day/night.
- Increased number of delivery vehicles, creating highway safety problems on adjoining sites.
- Insufficient parking proposed, creating problems on adjoining sites.
- Concerns that patients may wander into a busy road, causing highway safety concerns.
- Building works over a sustained period would cause unacceptable noise and disturbance to neighbouring residents.
- Proposals involve the change of use of the nursing home into a large mental institution that is unacceptable in this area.
- Fumes and air pollution from increased traffic.

Note: Notwithstanding these objections, there was a general attitude that the principle of extending the nursing home was acceptable due to need issues but only in an appropriate manner, and that the current proposals did not achieve this.

19 letters of support received, for the following reasons:

- Greatly value the care provided
- Welcome the enlarged and improved accommodation suitable for disabled people and enhanced access to improved gardens

Relevant Planning Policy

Winchester District Local Plan Review

H8 (accommodation for the elderly),
SF6 (new facilities and services),
HE5 (conservation area),
DP3 (design),
DP.4 (landscape and built environment),
CE.10 (nature conservation),
T1, T2, T3 and T4 (transport and parking)

Winchester Conservation Area Project (2003)

Planning Considerations

The main planning issues relate to:

- Principle of development
- Need for development
- Size, scale and massing
- Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area
- Impact on residential amenity
- Ecology
- Parking and highways
- Other matters

Principle of development

Policy H8 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review allows for extensions to existing residential care/nursing homes within settlements, subject to a number of specific criteria. Of particular relevance to the proposed scheme is that the policy requires that any extension should be in proportion to the main building. In addition, the policy requires that the site should be in an accessible location in relation to public transport, local facilities and open space, and have access to private amenity space. The site relates to an existing nursing home that is considered to be in an accessible location within Winchester, approximately 2km to the south of the city centre, and the proposals allow adequate private amenity space to serve the establishment and therefore the policy is partially satisfied. However, the key issue of whether the size and scale of the proposed extension is in proportion with the main building and its resultant impact on the surrounding conservation area, is discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

Need for development

The applicants highlight the following reasons to support the case for the proposed extensions to the existing home:

- Existing care home not meeting high standards demanded by people looking for residential care and needs upgrading.
- Poor financial performance.
- Trust's charitable status requires that the home is run to make the best use of the assets and, following a review in July 2007, the Trust concluded that the existing home required substantial investment.
- Shortfall of over 200 beds for residential/EMI care in the population centres of Winchester, Stockbridge, Eastleigh and Romsey.

The need for the extended facility, as identified by the applicant, is acknowledged, and in particular the need for such a facility to serve the local catchment area. However, the need for the facility should also be carefully balanced with the other relevant planning matters such as its size, impact in the conservation area, loss of trees and impact on residential amenity. These issues are discussed in detail in subsequent paragraphs.

Size, scale, layout and design

The proposed extensions would lead to the demolition of the northern two storey

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extension which would be replaced with a new two storey block of a similar footprint. A further extension of three storeys in height is proposed to the south of the original house. The new extensions would be formed to the north, west and south of the original building and amount to approximately seven times the size of the original footprint. The design of the proposed extensions is not considered objectionable in its own right, as it respects the design and architecture of the original building and is considered an acceptable approach to extending the accommodation. However, due to the sheer scale of the development, as demonstrated by the increase in the building's footprint and the overall height of the proposals, it is considered that the effect on the original building would be overwhelming. Clearly, the additions would be disproportionate to the size and scale of the original building. The overall increase in size of the building would conflict with the requirements of Policy H8 in that they would not amount to a proportionate extension, commensurate with the size and scale of the original building.

Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area

The existing building at St Cross Grange is considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, as does its setting behind mature planting and sloping areas of lawn to the St Cross Road frontage. Although already extended to the north, the principal elevation retains its original character as a strong element in the built form of the area. The character of this part of the conservation area, which is included in the St Cross Character Area, is of large areas of open space, with mature planting on the west side of St Cross Road and open land on the east, forming part of St Cross Park, related to St Cross Hospital. Buildings, where they exist, are generally large and set well back from the road, or screened by mature tree cover. The public realm is described in the Winchester Conservation Area Project (2003) as follows: "*St Cross Road changes in character as Winchester is entered from the south. The trees in front of the residential home and the grazing fields to the east give a very rural impression, causing the entry into St Cross Village, with its narrow pavements and dense building, to be quite abrupt*". This "rural" quality is therefore an important element of the characterisation of the area.

The proposed extensions are large in scale, height and massing and would increase the overall footprint of the original building substantially. As a result, it is considered that the proposed extensions would engulf the original building and would significantly undermine its primacy, which is contrary to the requirements for extensions to buildings in conservation areas as set out in Policy HE.5 of the WDLP Review. In addition to the harm caused to the existing building, the proposals would result in a significant loss of existing mature trees on the south and west boundaries. This, in combination with the proposed extensions, would result in the further urbanisation of an area that is currently still, in visual terms, part of the "country" approach to Winchester from the south, albeit it is acknowledged that in the Local Plan the site is included within the built-up area of the city. For these reasons the development would be to the detriment of the character of this part of the conservation area. On the above basis, it is considered that, due to the scale, height and massing of the proposed extensions, the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposals are therefore contrary to Policies H8, HE.5 and DP.3 of the WDLP Review. The supporting need for the facility is not considered to override the clear and substantial reasons to reject this scheme.

Impact on residential amenity

The site is bordered to the north, west and south by existing residential properties. The

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flats that have been built within the grounds of the home that are located to the north east are not considered to be adversely affected by the proposed development, as the replacement extension to the north of the home predominantly follows the footprint of the existing building and the proposed windows in the north elevation are at a distance and orientation that do not create any additional overlooking.

The west and south extensions would lead to the removal of most of the existing mature trees and vegetation along the boundaries with the neighbouring residential properties. To the west the recently built properties of Nos. 26–39 Grange Close abut the rear of the site. These properties are set at a higher level than the nursing home and have their rear gardens abutting the site. The existing trees form the backdrop to the gardens and largely screen the nursing home and its grounds from the private gardens and rear elevations. Whilst it is proposed to plant some replacement trees and a new hedgerow on the western boundary, the resulting change would be dramatic and result in a very open boundary with the neighbouring properties to the rear. The removal of the trees, and the close proximity of the proposed raised decking area in conjunction with other elements of the proposed extensions, including the bedroom windows at 1st and 2nd floor levels, would result in an unacceptable relationship between the neighbouring land uses, creating increased overlooking to the detriment of the residential amenity of neighbouring houses. Whilst it is recognised that the removal of these tall trees would improve the levels of light reaching the rear of the properties along this part of Grange Close, this is not considered to outweigh the level of harm caused to residential amenity through their removal.

The neighbouring properties of Nos. 19-24 Grange Road to the south of the site are arranged in a small cul-de-sac. No. 21 abuts the nursing home site and the removal of the tall trees on the boundary would open up views of the site. The proposed three storey extension would come close to the boundary and in this position, given the removal of the intervening trees, would have a substantial overbearing impact on the immediate neighbours and would be harmful to residential amenity. The proposed windows in the southern elevation are positioned so as not to create undue overlooking of these neighbouring properties.

Ecology

A large number of mature trees would be lost as a result of the development proposals (51 in total, plus 5 dead trees) and the removal of these trees would have a direct impact on the ecology of the site through the removal of a key habitat for wildlife, including protected species (bats). In compensation for their loss it is proposed to replace these trees with 51 new trees. The supporting landscape report explains that the replacement planting, including a new orchard and flower meadow, would provide adequate areas to encourage biodiversity. However, it is considered that the loss of a significant number of mature trees would significantly damage the biodiversity of the site and the proposed compensation measures for the loss of this habitat are considered inadequate for a development of this size and scale. On this basis the proposals are considered unacceptable from an ecological perspective and contrary to Policy DP.4 of the WDLP Review.

Parking and highways

In total, 20 designated car parking spaces are proposed to the front and north side of

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the building. In addition, 8 bicycle spaces, 2 spaces for light goods vehicles and an ambulance bay are proposed. It is noted that EMI accommodation results in a lower visiting rate than normal care because family involvement is generally reduced. It is also noted that the vehicular access road has recently been improved and the Highways Officer considers that the access is adequate to accommodate the small increase in traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development of the site. In conclusion, it is considered that the proposals would not lead to a significant increase in traffic generation or any overspill parking on the main highway such as to cause a highway safety concern.

Other Matters

Concern has been expressed from neighbouring residents over the provision of an EMI element of care through the current proposals, which it is feared would result in greater disturbance and safety issues with the adjoining residential area. The treatment of EMI residents within an established nursing home does not constitute a material change of use and as a result the existing building could be used for such purposes (albeit requiring a substantial refit) without the need for further planning permission. The fears expressed by neighbouring residents are acknowledged but it is considered that these types of issues could be dealt with by the management of the nursing home. It is therefore not considered that the use of the expanded premises, in itself, would justify refusing the planning application.

Conclusion

The proposed extensions are substantial in size, scale, height and massing and are considered to overwhelm the original building to the detriment of the existing character and appearance of the building and its setting. The substantial changes proposed, including the loss of a number of mature trees, would result in a building that is of a size and scale not in keeping with the surrounding conservation area and the development represents further urbanisation of a space that is currently still part of the "country" approach to Winchester from the south. The development is therefore contrary to the housing and conservation policies of the WDLP Review. Furthermore, the proposed extensions would result in the removal of substantial areas of trees on the western and southern boundaries, which is considered detrimental to residential amenity and the ecology of the site. The need for the expanded facility to partly serve a particular need relating to EMI residents is fully acknowledged but this is not considered to override the harm that would be caused by the development to the surrounding area.

Recommendation

Application Refused for the following reasons:

1. The development is contrary to Policies H8, HE.5, DP.3 and DP.4 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review and would harm the character and appearance of the conservation area for the following reasons:

- i) The size and mass of the proposed extensions would overwhelm and dominate the original building, and would not respect its character, scale and plan form.

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ii) The proposed extensions, and resultant loss of a substantial number of established tall trees, represents further urbanisation of an area that is currently still viewed as part of the “country” approach to the City of Winchester from the south.

2. The development is contrary to Policy DP.3 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review because the scale, mass and position of the proposed extensions, and the removal of a substantial number of established tall trees on the west and south boundaries, would have a harmful impact on the residential amenities of the adjoining residential properties in terms of a significant loss of privacy and outlook.

3. The development is contrary to Policies DP.4 and CE.10 of the WDLP Review because the loss of a substantial number of mature trees from within the site as a result of the proposed development would have a negative impact on ecology through the loss of important habitat areas for wildlife, including protected species. The compensation measures for the loss of this habitat are considered inadequate for a development of this size and scale and therefore the proposals are unacceptable from an ecological perspective.

Informative

The Local Planning Authority has taken account of the following Development Plan policies and proposals:

Winchester District Local Plan Review 2006:

H8 (accommodation for the elderly),
SF6 (new facilities and services),
HE5 (conservation area),
DP3 (design),
DP.4 (landscape and built environment),
CE.10 (nature conservation),
T1, T2, T3 and T4 (transport and parking)