

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 5 APRIL 2017

Application Number	3/16/1348/FUL
Proposal	Development of four specialist bungalows with a single storey office link and new car parking
Location	St Elizabeths School and Home, South End, Perry Green, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire, SG10 6EW
Applicant	Mr James Connolly, St Elizabeth's Centre
Parish	Much Hadham
Ward	Much Hadham

Date of Registration of Application	28 th June 2016
Target Determination Date	27 th September 2016
Reason for Committee Report	Major Development Proposal
Case Officer	Nicola Mckay

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions set out at the end of this report.

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The site is located within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt and forms part of the St Elizabeth's Centre. The St Elizabeth's Centre is identified within the adopted Local Plan as a Major Developed Site (MDS).
- 1.2 As the proposed development would be outside the defined boundary of the MDS, it would be contrary to Rural Area policy set out in policy GBC3 of the Local Plan. However, there are other material planning considerations in this case which weigh in favour of the proposal and, on balance, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal would outweigh any harm associated with a departure from Rural Area policy.

2.0 Site Description

- 2.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS Map. It is located within the east and south eastern part of the St Elizabeth's site which lies within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt to the south east of Much Hadham.

2.2 St. Elizabeth's Centre is a charitable organisation that provides care and support for people with severe epilepsy and other health conditions. The centre acts as an educational facility and provides residential care with nursing in small bungalows for 105 residents, and adult respite care.

3.0 Background to Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the development of 24 replacement bedrooms at the centre in 4 specialist 6-bed bungalows with an associated single storey office link and new car parking.
- 3.2 The applicant intends to upgrade the existing residential facilities within the site to improve the accommodation provided and provide en-suite bedrooms. This work will result in the loss of a number of bedroom spaces which are proposed to be replaced within the proposed new buildings. The applicant anticipates that the total number of residents would remain the same, at 105. The proposal is intended to be carried out in phases over an 8 year period.
- 3.3 The proposed accommodation would comprise of 3 single storey buildings. Blocks A and C would be located within the southern part of the site and would each be occupied by 6 en-suite bedrooms, an assisted bathroom, an office with treatment room and shared kitchen, lounge and dining rooms. Block B would comprise a similar building with 6 en-suite bedrooms and shared facilities with a connecting office in-between.
- 3.4 All of the buildings would be single storey in height and are designed with a series of pitched and hipped roofs and the office building is designed with a flat roof. The buildings would benefit from some areas of communal garden space with patio and terrace areas.
- 3.5 Two of the new bungalows would be located on an existing car park and the proposal also includes the proposed upgrade and re-modelling of an alternative car park to the south east of the site to replace the spaces lost. A parking area providing 18 spaces is proposed between Blocks B and C and a larger new car park, comprising of 145 spaces with areas of soft landscaping is proposed within the southern part of the site.
- 3.6 Amended plans were submitted during the course of the application in response to comments received from the Council's Landscape Advisor and neighbouring occupiers and a revised drainage strategy has been

submitted following comments received from the Lead Local Flood Authority.

4.0 Key Policy Issues

- 4.1 These relate to the relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the pre-submission East Herts District Plan 2016 and the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007:

Key Issue	NPPF	Local Plan policy	Pre-submission District Plan policy
Character and appearance- The impact that the development would have upon the character and appearance of the site and that of the surrounding Rural Area	Sections 3 and 7	GBC3 and ENV1	GBR2 and DES3
Neighbour impact-Whether the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the amenities of neighbouring residential properties	Section 7	ENV1	DES3
Parking-Whether suitable provision is made	Section 4	TR7	TRA3

Other relevant issues are referred to in the 'Consideration of Relevant Issues' section below.

5.0 Emerging District Plan

- 5.1 The Council resolved to proceed to the publication of its pre-submission version of the District Plan at the meeting of Council of 22 Sept 2016. Consultation on the Plan has recently been completed and the detail of the responses is now being considered by Officers. The view of the Council is that the Plan has been positively prepared, seeking to ensure significantly increased housing development during the plan period. The weight that can be assigned to the policies in the emerging plan can now be increased, given it has reached a further stage in preparation. There does remain a need to qualify that weight somewhat, given that the detail of the responses to the consultation is yet to be considered.

5.2 In relation to the key issues identified above, the policies contained in the emerging District Plan do not differ significantly from those contained in the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF as identified above. Given its stage in preparation, little weight can currently be accorded to the emerging Plan.

6.0 Summary of Consultee Responses

6.1 HCC Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission. It comments that the proposal is acceptable in a highways context, and that a pergola shown on the northern tip of the site should not obstruct the nearby public right of way which crosses the site. As this work will be carried out in phases over a 8-10 year period it does not envisage that a construction traffic management plan will be needed. However, all traffic should be directed to/from the site via the B1004.

6.2 The Lead Local Flood Authority initially objected to the proposal due to the absence of a surface water drainage strategy. However, following lengthy discussions between the applicant and the Flood Authority it has removed its objection and advises that the site can be adequately drained and any surface water flood risk can be mitigated if the development is carried out in accordance with the overall drainage strategy.

6.3 Thames Water comments that with regards to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of the developer to make suitable provision. With regards to sewerage infrastructure capacity it would not have any objection.

6.4 The EHDC Landscape Advisor initially recommended refusal and recommended some adjustments to the plan for the bungalows and parking area with the large car park being broken up by areas of soft landscaping. Following the submission of amended plans they recommend approval and comment that there would be no unacceptable adverse impact upon trees and that the revised master plan (1209/4.5) is acceptable with all previous landscape comments suitably addressed.

6.5 Herts Ecology comments that it does not have any biological records specifically for the site itself. However, there are records of Great Crested Newts in the area. The site appears to be a large, short mown/cut, field with patches of bare ground and areas of hardstanding and therefore the risk to Great Crested Newts is considered to be negligible, however, an informative is recommended. It is noted that a

wildlife walk is planned to the eastern edge of area 1 and they would like to see a Biodiversity Management Plan to see details of how this would be managed and maintained to enhance biodiversity.

6.6 HCC Historic Environment Advisor comments that the proposal should be regarded as likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and therefore a condition is recommended to require a programme of archaeological work to take place.

6.7 National Grid does not object to the proposal.

7.0 Parish Council Representations

7.1 No representations have been received from Much Hadham Parish Council.

8.0 Summary of Other Representations

8.1 Representations have been received from two neighbouring occupiers. A representation from 2 Old Park Cottages states that their only concern with the proposal is privacy as two of the bungalows would overlook their property. They comment that they have no objection so long as the tree line is extended or a tall hedgerow is created along the boundary. However, they note that the revised plans submitted do not show the landscaping extending to their boundary. A representation from the occupiers of Old Park Barn initially objected to the proposal and commented that there is a severe gap in screening between their property and where the new buildings are proposed and the majority of the screening is deciduous and within their own site. However, subsequent comments were received that state that on the understanding that new drawings would be submitted to overcome their concerns they withdraw their objection.

9.0 Planning History

9.1 The site has a history of planning applications for extensions and alterations to the various buildings within the site, none of which appear to be directly relevant to the current proposal.

10.0 Consideration of Relevant Issues

Principle of the development

10.1 Policy GBC3 outlines specific types of development that are deemed to be appropriate within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. New

development for education and care purposes is not listed within policy GBC3 and therefore the proposal must be considered to form a departure from this policy.

- 10.2 It is then necessary to consider whether there are any other material planning considerations in this case that would outweigh the departure from Rural Area policy and any other harm that would arise from the proposals.

Character and appearance of the area

- 10.3 The proposal would extend beyond the existing built up area of the St Elizabeth's Centre, replacing two existing hard surfaced parking areas. The proposed new car park would extend into an existing undeveloped area of grass that occupies the south eastern corner of the site. The proposed new buildings, together with the loss of this undeveloped area and the formation of a new car park would inevitably change the character and appearance of this part of the site. However, the amended plans submitted for the car park have now incorporated significantly improved areas of soft landscaping which, together with existing boundary planting, would help to mitigate the impact that this would have upon the character of the surrounding Rural Area.
- 10.4 The proposed buildings are of single storey height and would appear sympathetic to a number of other existing bungalow buildings within the site. The plans submitted suggest that a brick or timber cladding and render would be used for the buildings, which appears to be acceptable in principle. However, a condition is recommended requiring full details of the materials of construction to be agreed in the interests of the appearance of the site. Officers are satisfied with the overall appearance of the buildings and consider that they would have a limited and acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the Rural Area.

Neighbour impact

- 10.5 The closest neighbouring residential properties to the proposed development are 1 and 2 Old Park Cottages which are situated close to the north east boundary of the site and Old Park Farm which adjoins the east site boundary. A distance of approximately 45 metres would be retained to the rear of the dwelling houses at 1 and 2 Old Park Cottages and approximately 55 metres would be retained to the rear of the dwelling house at Old Park Barn. Having regard to these distances, the single storey height of the proposed buildings and proposed boundary planting, Officers do not consider that the proposal would

have an unacceptable impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

- 10.6 The representations received from the neighbouring occupiers have been considered and it is noted that the concerns raised by the occupiers of Old Park Farm appear to have been overcome with the amended plans submitted detailing additional boundary planting. The outstanding concerns raised by the occupiers of 2 Old Park Cottages are noted. However, new tree planting is shown on Drawing ref. 1209/6.1 close to the boundary with this property. Given the distances between the proposed new buildings and these neighbouring dwelling houses, Officers do not consider that additional boundary planting would be necessary to make the development acceptable. The new building would not have an overbearing impact or result in an unacceptable loss of light, outlook or privacy for the occupiers of these neighbouring dwellings.

Parking

- 10.7 The applicant has outlined that the existing site provides 349 parking spaces and the proposal would result in a total provision of 352 spaces, a slight increase. The Planning, Design and Access Statement that has been submitted with the application outlines that parking surveys have been undertaken within the site. It is stated that the busiest time of day is between 1.45pm and 3pm when there is a shift changeover of staff. However, the surveys showed that there was an average of 302 vehicles on site at this busiest time of the day. As the intention is for the occupancy of the site to remain the same as existing, and having regard to the comments received from the Highway Authority, Officers consider that a suitable level of parking is proposed and there is no indication that the proposal would result in a severe impact on highway capacity or safety, or a detrimental impact upon amenity.

Drainage and ecology

- 10.8 Having regard to the revised drainage strategy and the comments received from the Lead Local Flood Authority, the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact upon flood risk.
- 10.9 It is noted that Herts Ecology have recommended a condition to require the submission of a Biodiversity Management Plan to see details of how the planned wildlife walk would be managed and maintained to enhance biodiversity. However, this comprises of only a small area to the east of Block B. Officers consider that the provision of a wildlife walk is an added benefit to the proposal that is not a necessary part of

the development to make it acceptable and consider that its maintenance can be dealt with by the centre in the same way as the other communal garden areas within the site. An informative is recommended in respect of Great Crested Newts as recommended by Herts Ecology.

Benefits of the proposal

- 10.10 As outlined within the Background section above, the proposal would enable the existing residential facilities within the site to be upgraded and for en-suites to be provided to the bedrooms of residents. The applicant has indicated that the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 sets out a number of objectives by which care providers are assessed which includes wheelchair accessibility and that accommodation ensures the privacy of the service user and encourages an appropriate degree of independent living. The proposal would enable private en-suite facilities to be provided for residents whilst still living within shared bungalows, using communal kitchen and living areas.
- 10.11 St Elizabeth's centre is a unique, specialist facility and this development is necessary in order to support its work. The charitable organisation is well-respected and valued within the district and considerable weight should be given to the need to support this facility. Some of the accommodation on the site requires modernisation now to meet the expectations of the Care Quality Commission and DDA compliance and these proposals would enable that re-modelling and improvement work on a phased basis. Significant weight is given to the improved specialist facility in this case.

11.0 Conclusion

- 11.1 Whilst the proposal would be contrary to Rural Area policy and would have some impact on the character of the area, that impact is considered to be limited and, as set out above, other matters related to drainage, highways, parking, neighbour amenity and landscaping are all considered to have neutral weight in the balance of considerations. Given that, and having regard to the benefits of the proposal in significantly improving the specialist facilities at the site, Officers consider that the positive aspects of the proposal are sufficient to outweigh the policy objection to development in the Rural Area, and any harm to the surrounding area.

Conditions

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Approved plans (2E10)
3. Materials of construction (2E11)
4. Programme of archaeological work (2E02)
5. All HGV traffic shall be directed to/from the site via the B1004 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and prior to the commencement of demolition or construction, wheel washing facilities shall be established within the site and shall be kept in operation at all times during demolition and construction works.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

6. Landscape design proposals (4P12)
7. Landscape works implementation (4P13)
8. The approved development shall be carried out in accordance with the Outline Drainage Strategy REF: 216264 – Feb 2017 prepared by Mason Navarro Pledge Ltd and unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority, the following mitigation measures :
 1. The drainage is to include grasscrete with perimeter trench, swale and flow restrictor as indicated on the drawing SK-D-01 rev 2 date 01/03/17;
 2. Appropriate attenuation volume, with a minimum of 738 m³, shall be implemented to ensure the final discharge rate will never exceed the pre-development rate;
 3. Two sustainable treatment stages for the surface water collecting from new access road and trafficked areas shall be provided to ensure there is no detrimental impact to the watercourse for water quality and ecological purposes.

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site in accordance with the aims of Policy ENV21 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

9. No development shall take place until the final surface water drainage scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include:
 1. Detailed drainage plan showing the location, size and engineering details of the proposed SuDS, pipe runs, manholes etc. The detailed engineering details of the design of the proposed SuDS should be in line with *The SuDS Manual (CIRIA C-753)*;
 2. The details above should be supported by the final detailed drainage calculations for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus climate change allowance. Surface water calculations should take account of the whole site area not just impermeable areas. A greenfield runoff rate should aim to be achieved for the final discharge to the ditch. If that is not achievable, a betterment rate may be deemed acceptable.

The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site. in accordance with the aims of Policy ENV21 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informatives

1. You are advised to ensure that grass/vegetation within the site is kept as short as possible up to, and including, the time when the building works take place so that it is unsuitable for animals to cross and that any stored building materials used in connection with the approved development are raised off the ground e.g. on pallets or batons and any rubbish is cleared away to minimise the risk of Great Crested Newts using these for shelter. You are advised to back fill or add a ramp to any trenches or excavations left at night. In the event of Great Crested Newts being found work should stop immediately and ecological advice taken on how to proceed lawfully. For further advice please contact Natural England on 0300 060 3900.

2. You are advised to ensure that the public right of way remains unobstructed during construction works and that any damage caused is made good to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority. For further advice on this matter you are advised to contact County Highways on 01992 555555.

Summary of Reasons for Decision

East Herts Council has considered the applicant's proposal in a positive and proactive manner with regard to the policies of the Development Plan; the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.