

Agenda Item 25.

Development Management Ref No	No weeks on day of committee	Parish	Ward	Listed by:
161061	10	Wokingham Town	Emmbrook	Council's own Development

Applicant Housing Services, Wokingham Borough Council
Location Foxwood, Milton Road, Wokingham **Postcode** RG40 1DD
Proposal Full application for the proposed change of use from an education college (C2) use to residential hostel (Sui Generis).
Type Other (Change of Use)
PS Category 632
Officer Daniel Ray

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Planning Committee on 20th July 2016
REPORT PREPARED BY Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

SUMMARY

The application proposes the conversion of a former C2 Residential Institution (education college) to a hostel (Sui Generis) to provide temporary accommodation for homeless families and individuals on a temporary basis.

Foxwood was built as a residential dwelling but was converted in 1999/2000 to its most recent use as a college which has now relocated at an alternative site at the Brambles Centre and as such there is no net loss of an educational establishment.

The site is within a sustainable location, close to the town centre with excellent transport links. The only external alterations are replacement windows whilst all other alterations would be internal only.

The site currently benefits from 8 parking spaces including a disabled parking bay.

The hostel would have an office space which would provide space for a Specialist Housing Officer who would manage the site and scheme during regular Monday-Friday office hours.

Concern has been raised by two local residents regarding overlooking, loss of privacy, security, character of the area, noise and disturbance and increase in traffic causing highway safety issues. Whilst these concerns are understood, the proposal would not have a detrimental impact due to these issues at a level that would warrant refusal. Para's 4 to 14 covers these concerns in greater detail.

PLANNING STATUS

- Major Development Site
- SPA (7km)
- Aerodrome Safeguarding for Wind

RECOMMENDATION

That the application is approved subject to the following conditions;

A. Conditions and informatives:

1. *Timescale*

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. *Approved details*

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered SL15065/02 Rev A, 160117/002 and SK.01 received by the local planning authority on 19 April 2016. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. *External materials*

The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall be of a similar appearance to those used in the existing building unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

4. *Hours of construction*

No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

5. *Restriction of permitted development rights - windows*

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning, (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no additional windows or similar openings shall be constructed in the first floor level or above in any elevation of the development hereby permitted except for any which may be shown on the approved drawing(s).

To safeguard the residential amenities of neighbouring properties. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3

PLANNING HISTORY

- F/1999/70516 - Proposed Change Of Use From Residential(C3) To Non-residential Education (D1) Use And Erection Of Two storey side extension plus single storey front extension – Permitted
- F/2010/2192 - Proposed provision of extruded roll mesh grass protection to existing grassed area. – Permitted
- F/2009/1326 - Proposed erection of new motorised security entrance gate plus

- alterations to boundary fencing. – Permitted
- TP/2008/0492 - Application for Temporary Permission for the installation of a standalone modular class room. – Permitted

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area	789sqm
Proposed and existing land use	Sui Generis (Hostel); C2 (Education College)
Change in floor space	0
Change in parking spaces	0

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Woodley Town Council	None Received
Local Members	None Received
Environmental Health	No objection
Highways	No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Two letters of concern/objection were received from local residents, these comments and concerns are as follows:

- What is the estimated cost of renovation and how long will it be used?
- The house is old and constructed on a municipal rubbish tip and had severe subsidence, has this been resolved?
- Who exactly is going to be living there?
- Who is responsible for the maintained and surrounds?
- What happens during evenings and weekends if there is a problem?
- The proposal will lead to overlooking due to the south facing windows
- Loss of residential amenity by reason of loss of privacy
- Adverse affect on the residential amenity due to noise and disturbance, the occupation of the property by up to 6 different families will lead to noise and disturbances, occupants of the hostel will be transient and as such not care for the house, the surroundings nor be motivated to respect the neighbourhood or neighbours.
- Noise and disturbance from extra vehicles; the number of vehicles will be 2 per resident and this will lead to an unacceptable amount of vehicular noise in a quiet neighbourhood.
- The exit of Foxwood is within 20m of a busy mini-roundabout, there is poor visibility on a busy stretch of road. Any increase in traffic entering or leaving Foxwood, being so close to the roundabout, will present an increased risk to road users.
- A change of use to a hostel is not in keeping with an area of privately owned houses that are maintained to a high standard; the transient occupants will not

care for the house, surroundings etc.

- The site plan is incorrect as the site of Foxwood has sprawled beyond its boundaries to the south and these needs to be reinstated immediately, the site needs maintaining, cleared and tidied and the buildings in the surround should be removed.

APPLICANTS POINTS

- None

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC07	Parking
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB09	Residential accommodation for vulnerable groups
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of development and site

1. The application proposes the change of use of the disused educational establishment to a hostel (Sui Generis) to provide 5 units for vulnerable individuals and families whom have been made homeless.
2. Each of the units would have bedroom/living space and a small kitchen area. Three would have their own bathrooms whilst units 2 and 3 would share a bathroom. All of the flats would share external amenity area and a laundry which is attached to a communal W/C. The occupants would share the garden area.
3. The site would have an office which would be occupied during normal office

hours, Monday to Friday. The occupants would be able to contact Housing Services out of hours should any problems occur, however from other sites managed by Housing Services their experience is that that this is rare.

4. The development would provide space for those who have been made homeless. The site would provide temporary housing (on a likely 6/9 month basis) which would be much more cost effective than long term stay in a bed and breakfast housing and to ensure that relocation away from Wokingham didn't take place. Housing would be provided until individuals were able to find alternative accommodation.

Principle of Development

1. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
2. The site is located within a major development location and within a settlement boundary and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers and this is discussed below.
3. The site is in a sustainable location, and whilst a hostel, would be residential in nature within a location characterised by residential dwellings.
4. Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities) of the Core Strategy outlines that planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of *(b) Children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs* whilst Policy TB09 (residential accommodation for vulnerable groups) of the MDD supports support for vulnerable adults and families in situations such as this. In this instance, the proposal would be in accordance with the spirit of Policies CP2 and TB09 as the scheme would provide accommodation for families who have been made homeless, therefore their need is being met through this scheme.

Impact upon the Character of the Area

5. The proposed development would not have a negative impact on the character of the area. The only external alterations are replacement windows and the residential appearance of the building would be retained.
6. The site has been vacant for over 12 months and as such, the re-use of the building would bring about a greater requirement for maintenance of the building (which would be positive for the overall appearance of the site rather than allowing the building to decline and fall in to disrepair).

Access and movement

7. Concern has been raised by local residents that the site is close a mini-roundabout on a busy route, with a greater number of vehicles entering and exiting the site which would lead to highway safety issues. However the access and visibility for drivers is considered acceptable, meets highway standards and no concern has been raised by Highways in terms of highway safety. 8 parking spaces are provided which is adequate provision in line with Wokingham Borough Council's Parking Standards.

Residential Amenities

8. Concern has been raised by neighbouring residents that the proposal would lead to direct overlooking, specifically to the south. The most immediate neighbours are to the north and west. No first floor windows are present or proposed in the north elevation of the building with acute angles from the first floor western elevation (bedrooms and kitchen windows) to the properties to the north. Existing boundary treatments and planting does not allow for any direct views in to neighbouring properties or their gardens to the north from the ground floor. As such there no concerns relating to overlooking to the neighbouring properties of Cornerhaven and Benfieldside.
9. The bedroom and kitchen windows within the western elevation do face the rear garden of Tuscany, however the garden extends some 23 metres to the boundary from the opposing elevation. In addition, planting and boundary treatments do not allow for direct views. The Borough Design Guide highlights that there should be a minimum of 22 metres between back to back elevations, and 12 metres for flank elevations (Tuscany is perpendicular to Foxwood). As such there is ample separation distance between Foxwood and the nearest residential dwelling to the west.
10. To the south, the nearest neighbour is Midtrees. Within the first floor of the southern elevation of Foxwood, the proposed development would result in a bedroom window, a kitchen window and a window that would serve a stairwell. The nearest point of the boundary of Midtrees is some 25 metres from elevation. A garden area then separates the boundary from the drive, beyond which is the northern elevation of the dwelling, which is 52 metres away. Due to boundary treatments and mature planting, including an Oak and a Lime tree which are both protected by TPO's, there would be no overlooking as a result of this development.
11. Concern has been raised that the additional vehicle movements would lead to noise and disturbance. However given that the site is within a sustainable location with the town centre which is within walking distance of the site, as well as having excellent access to local bus services and the railway, it is expected that the proposal's requirement for vehicle movements would be much reduced. In addition to this, no concern has been raised by either Highways nor Environmental Health in relation to noise and disturbance as a result of this development.
12. Comments have been received that because of the transient nature of the occupiers, there would be a lack of respect and ownership of the site and that

due consideration and care to the residential amenity of nearby residents would be given. This is not a planning consideration but the site would be managed by Wokingham Borough Council and it is unlikely that any misuse or lack of care for the site or surroundings would be tolerated.

Trees and Landscape

13. No alteration to landscaping is proposed as part of this development. Planting to the front of the building, adjacent to Milton Road is present and these would need to be managed appropriately due to the nature of the site becoming occupied. The garden would also need to be maintained for occupiers to provide useful external amenity space. Overall, the development is likely to improve the overall appearance of the site and area due to the need for improved maintenance.

Other issues

14. Neighbours have raised concern that a number of out buildings are not on the submitted plans, and maintenance to fences and boundaries needs to take place as well as the site itself encroaching beyond its boundaries.

15. Any outbuildings do not form part of this proposal and are likely no longer required since the relocation of the education establishment. Further, these are existing structures and their retention does not need planning permission. As part of the use of the site, as described above, greater maintenance and management of the site will automatically be required. Should there be any particular issues regarding maintenance of boundaries etc. that these should be directed to Housing Services who will be managing the site. Notwithstanding the above, the contents of this report and the concerns raised shall be passed on to Housing Services so that they are aware of these concerns.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development would be in accordance with adopted policy, principally Policies CP2 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and TB09 of the MDD in that the proposed scheme would provide a sustainable and appropriate form of shelter for vulnerable groups. The proposed development would not have a significant impact on the residential amenity of any neighbours, would not cause any highway issues and would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the area.

Subject to the use of the conditions outlined above, the application is recommended for approval.

CONTACT DETAILS

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