



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Ms H Morley
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18 July 2018

Your ref: 202391

Our ref: UTT/18/1452/PA

Please ask for Luke Mills on 01799 510458
email: lmills@uttlesford.gov.uk

BY EMAIL

Dear Ms Morley

PLANNING ADVICE

RE: HOMEBASE, ELIZABETH CLOSE, SAFFRON WALDEN

I refer to the above request for planning advice, which was received on 24 May and followed by a meeting on 7 June. The advice in this letter is based on the information submitted and will not be binding on the Council or its Committees when considering any formal application. A site visit has not been undertaken.

PROPOSAL

The proposed development comprises the demolition of the existing DIY store and redevelopment of the site to include a 68-bedroom care home with associated car parking and landscaping.

HISTORY

There appears to be no recent, relevant planning history for the site. The original planning permission for the DIY store (UTT/1574/87) has been followed by a number of variations to the condition restricting the range of goods that are sold from the premises, with an application for a further variation currently under consideration (UTT/18/1467/FUL).

PLANNING POLICIES

The starting point for any planning decision is the Local Plan, which can be viewed online at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/localplan. The following saved policies are relevant:

- S1 – Development Limits for the Main Urban Areas
- GEN1 – Access
- GEN2 – Design
- GEN3 – Flood Protection
- GEN4 – Good Neighbourliness
- GEN6 – Infrastructure Provision to Support Development
- GEN7 – Nature Conservation
- GEN8 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- ENV10 – Noise Sensitive Development and Disturbance from Aircraft
- ENV13 – Exposure to Poor Air Quality

- ENV14 – Contaminated Land
- H1 – Housing Development

The following documents are relevant to the interpretation of the above policies:

- The Essex Design Guide (2005)
- Parking Standards: Design and Good Practice (2009)
- Uttlesford Local Residential Parking Standards (2013)

The following documents are also relevant to the planning assessment:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - Paragraphs 14, 17, 32-39, 47-50, 55, 58-66, 100-104, 111, 118, 120-122 & 124
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
 - Air quality
 - Design
 - Flood risk and coastal change
 - Housing and economic development needs assessments
 - Land affected by contamination
 - Natural environment
 - Planning obligations
 - Travel Plan, Transport Assessments and Statements
- House of Commons Written Statement: Sustainable drainage systems (HCWS161) (2014)
- Planning Update: Written statement (HCWS488) (2015)
- West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2015)
- Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2016)
- Air Quality Action Plan 2017 – 2022
- Housing Trajectory 1 April 2017 (August 2017)

APPRAISAL

The proposal is assessed under relevant headings below (applicable policies in brackets).

Location of housing (S1, H1 & 55)

The site's location within the Development Limits and built-up area of Saffron Walden ensures that there is no conflict with local or national policies on the location of housing.

Character and appearance (S1, GEN2, 58-66 & PPG)

The existing DIY store adds little to the character of the area so the site's redevelopment offers an opportunity for improvement. The proposed design approach has a traditional basis with contemporary elements, which would harmonise with the residential character of the surrounding area. However, the submission lacks street scene drawings so it is not possible to establish whether the overall mass of the building would have an overpowering impact. I note that subtle articulation has been used to break up the monotony of the design but the overall scale of the building is considerable. The street scene drawings would also allow an assessment of the height relationship with surrounding buildings.

Transport (GEN1, GEN8, 32-39, PPG & HCWS488)

The site's location within one of the District's main urban areas ensures that staff and visitors would have relatively good sustainable transport options, in accordance with relevant local and national policies. It is noted that the nature of the use ensures that residents would be less likely to travel.

The safety of the proposed vehicular access, the effect of the development on road capacity and the suitability of the proposed parking arrangements would be assessed in consultation with the highway authority (Essex County Council). While the vehicular access point would be similar to the existing situation, the sensitivity of the town's road network to significant changes in vehicle movements and the unique parking requirements ensure that pre-application discussions are encouraged. Details of the County Council's pre-application advice service can be found at:

<http://www.essex.gov.uk/Environment%20Planning/Development-in-Essex/Pages/Developer-information.aspx>

Amenity (GEN2, GEN4, ENV10 & 17)

The considerable separation distances between the proposed care home and surrounding buildings ensure that there would be no significant loss of privacy or daylight for existing residents. However, the close proximity of the east-facing bedrooms to Saffron Business Centre ensures that the future residents could be subjected to noise disturbance from storage and distribution uses, and inadequate privacy as a result of overlooking from the adjacent first floor offices. It may be possible to address the former with mitigation measures but the latter is difficult to resolve without amending the internal layout.

Flooding (GEN3, 100-104, PPG, HCWS161 & SFRA)

The site is not in an area that is identified as at risk of flooding. However, the proposal is a 'major development' so it would be necessary to include a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) as an integral part of the design. The suitability of the SuDS would be assessed in consultation with the lead local flood authority, Essex County Council.

Infrastructure (GEN6)

The Council does not have any specific requirements, by way of policies or guidance, for contributions towards off-site infrastructure. Therefore, contributions would only be sought if justified within the consultation responses received in relation to a planning application.

Biodiversity (GEN7, 118 & PPG)

Any planning application must be accompanied by a completed biodiversity checklist, which would indicate whether an ecological survey would be necessary. All submitted ecological information would be assessed in consultation with the Council's ecological consultant.

Air quality (ENV13, 124 & PPG)

The site is not in the Saffron Walden Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) but it has the potential to significantly alter the number of vehicle movements and, consequently, the level of air pollution. The assessment of transport impacts would clarify whether any detailed assessment of air quality impacts would be necessary.

Contamination (ENV14, 120-122 & PPG)

It appears that there is potential for land contamination. Therefore, any planning application should be accompanied by a Phase 1 contamination report.

Housing land supply (47-50 & PPG)

Paragraphs 47-49 of the NPPF describe the importance of maintaining a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. As identified in the most recent housing trajectory document, Housing Trajectory 1 April 2017 (August 2017), the Council's housing land supply is currently 3.77 – 4.2 years.

The Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan currently has limited weight in planning decisions but it is notable that, at paragraph 3.61, it confirms the need for an additional 504 care home places over the plan period. While this reflects a relatively small portion of the

overall housing need, the proposal's contribution towards meeting the Council's housing land supply target would amount to a benefit of some weight.

Previously developed land (111)

The proposal involves the reuse of previously developed land, as is encouraged by the NPPF.

CONCLUSION

The proposal accords with policies on the location of housing and there are no policies that safeguard the site's existing use. Therefore, subject to the assessment of impacts on road capacity and air quality, it is likely that a care home development could be supported in principle. The proposed design is generally compatible with its surroundings but the submitted information does not allow a conclusion to be drawn on the appropriateness of the scale. A topic that requires further consideration is the effect of the Saffron Business Centre on the amenity of future residents, and I would encourage pre-application discussions with the highway authority regarding the parking provision.

MAKING AN APPLICATION

Should you wish to submit an application for full planning permission, please ensure that the following information is included as a minimum:

- Application form
- Location Plan
- Block Plan
- Elevations, floor plans, roof plans and any other relevant drawings e.g. site sections
- Design and Access Statement
- Air Quality Impact Assessment
- Biodiversity Checklist, and further ecological surveys as appropriate
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Land Contamination Assessment
- Statement of Community Involvement
- SuDS Checklist
- Transport Assessment

Further guidance on information requirements can be found in the Planning Practice Guidance, and at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/planningapplicationforms.

I trust that the above advice is useful, although please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any clarification.

Yours sincerely



Luke Mills MRTPI
Senior Planning Officer