

WINCHESTER & EASTLEIGH DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting: 22/08/2023

Site: 2,4,6,8 Toynbee Road and 2,3,4,5 Romsey Close, Eastleigh, SO50 9DP

Proposal: Redevelopment for retirement living accommodation for older people comprising 83 retirement apartments including communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping

Planning reference: F/23/95527

Design Review Panel Members sitting on the Panel: Scot Masker (Chair), Jon Moore & Hatem Nabih

Council Officers in attendance: Gary Osmond

Item presented by: Gary Osmond

Declarations of Interest declared: None

Comments:

Context:

The site lies on the edge of a transitional area between the larger and higher scale development fronting the main Leigh/Romsey Roads to the south and the much smaller two storey domestic scale of development to the north, of which the site currently forms a part. As such, any redevelopment of the site needs to ensure an appropriate transition between the differing physical characters of these two areas is achieved. Having considered the design submitted, the Panel raised strong concerns at the appropriateness of a four storey development, particularly of the large scale proposed, in this transitional area. Whilst it was acknowledged that the recently completed scheme on the former Police Station site, now called 'Alston House' and other development fronting Romsey Road to the east has set a precedent for larger and taller buildings, the immediate context of these sites, which front a busy main road, are quite different from that of the application site.

The same concerns in relation to scale and height also relate to the resulting street scenes and the existing character of Toynbee Road, which is predominantly two storey pairs of semi-detached dwellings. Where there are larger scale buildings, these are of a much narrower width or set well back from the street, such as in the case of Alston House and Canada Court, or of a much lower height and form, as in the case of the school opposite. That

proposed for the site is not only much taller than immediate neighbouring development but is also of a much greater width, resulting in a very large and imposing building which would dominate the street scene and the wider locality, particularly when viewed from Romsey Close and Toynbee Close, not helped by the removal of the belt of trees along the northern boundary of the site.

Appearance:

Whilst the Panel's principal concerns relate to size, scale, mass and appropriateness for the locality, concern was also raised at the bland and uninspiring architectural design of that proposed. This is likely to be a result of using standard apartment layouts, which give little flexibility to provide any interest in architectural form or elevational composition. The elevations are non-descript and monotonous, appearing to use cheap standard materials and lacking anything which would help to visually enhance the building or the wider locality.

Living Environment, Shading & Overheating:

Significant concern was raised in relation to the use of single aspect units, many of which would receive little to no sunlight, even in the summer months, due to the height and shape of the building and its north facing 'courtyard'. Equally, there was concern at the lack of any suggestion of physical measures to prevent overheating of those units which face south, such as bre-solei or inset balconies. It was suggested that a daylight and sunlight study, as well as a solar heating study be undertaken to demonstrate if the necessary quality of internal environment can be achieved by that proposed.

The rationale for placing the main entrance and communal lounge and patio on the northern side of the building was questioned. Not only would these important spaces be in permanent shade, but they would also have a very poor outlook, facing onto the car park, and have no direct visual link with the street or wider area.

Externally the landscaped areas surrounding the building appear to be minimal and would do little to soften the physical size of the building or provide much in the way of an attractive or interesting outlook for residents. The width of this space also appears to be insufficient to accommodate any new tree planting of a scale appropriate to that of the building. It was also questioned whether the development could meet the requirements in terms of biodiversity net gain, given the size of the currently undeveloped gardens.

Conclusion:

Although it appears that some analysis of the locality has been undertaken, there is no clear design rationale to demonstrate how the development would fit into its existing context in a manner which does not jar with the nature, scale or form of neighbouring development. Nor does there appear to have been any consideration as to how redevelopment of the site could enhance

the locality or provide an attractive and pleasant living environment for future residents. Whilst the self-imposed constraints of the applicant are acknowledged, these do not explain the poor quality of that proposed or the need to overdevelop the site to the detriment of the character of the area.