

WINCHESTER & EASTLEIGH DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting: 19/03/2024

Site: Land rear of 12 Sydney Avenue, Hamble-le-Rice, Southampton, SO31 4JP

Proposal: Construction of 7 no. bungalows with associated parking and landscaping, and vehicle access from Sydney Avenue

Planning reference: F/23/96606

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

Council Officers in attendance: Rebecca Altman, Summer Sharpe & Gary Osmond

Item presented by: Rebecca Altman (Planning Case Officer)

Declarations of Interest declared: None

Comments:

The Panel were of the opinion that despite the awkward shape of the application site, there was scope to provide a well-considered scheme of an appropriate design quality. However, the currently proposed scheme did not yet achieve this.

The current layout does not make best use of space, particularly along the site access and parking area where there is ample room to provide much more soft landscaping, including new tree planting, which would greatly improve the approach into the development, as well as assisting with biodiversity and sustainable drainage. It was also considered that such obvious segregation of pedestrians and vehicles was not necessary and could easily be a shared surface treatment. If a separate footway is to be provided, it was suggested that this would be better placed on the other side of the driveway.

The idea of providing a central communal courtyard was supported, however, the current layout does not provide a sufficient level of enclosure, instead it 'bleeds' out into the parking area. It was suggested that a more successful layout would be to place one range of three dwellings along the northern edge and a second range of three along the western edge, with the potential for a detached dwelling towards the south-eastern corner. This would provide a more enclosed and sheltered south facing courtyard space with the option to

provide small individual garden spaces to the front of each dwelling, looking onto a shared central communal space. Such a layout would provide some separation from the parking area, as well as making good use of solar gain for the main living spaces. It would also negate the need to provide separate private amenity spaces to the rear of each dwelling, where it was accepted that space is at a premium up to the site boundaries. The need for individual private amenity spaces in the conventional manner was not considered entirely necessary if that proposed is to be a retirement development, relying on a management company to maintain the surrounding landscape. The spaces around the edges of the site may be better used as part of the general communal landscaping of the development to provide an attractive setting and outlook, rather than as a series of conventional gardens.

The proposed pedestrian connection to Hamble Lane was welcomed, as this would provide better connections with the surrounding area, in particular the local shops. However, as shown it did appear to be rather long and narrow. This may be a rather unwelcome route, particularly if it is to be bound on both sides by high fencing. The option to open this route up for general public use could also be explored, as this would provide wider community benefits.

Architecturally that proposed lacked interest or imagination. Whilst it is not necessary to strive for an exceptional architectural standard, the inclusion of some simple architectural elements and details would greatly lift the quality of the design, such as porch canopies and brick detailing. This was particularly considered to be the case for the terrace of three dwellings, which whilst simple in form, lacked visual interest. In contrast, the proposed southern terrace of four was unnecessarily complicated in footprint, form and roofscape.

With further thought as to the layout and how the resulting spaces can and will be used, together with the appearance of the buildings and integration of hard and soft landscaping, which will be a key aspect of a successful scheme, there is the potential to design an attractive development of its own character. This may however, require considerable amendments to the currently proposed scheme and input from a landscape design professional.