

WINCHESTER & EASTLEIGH DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting: 14/05/2024

Site: Land at Fieldfare Road, Winchester Road, Boorley Green, SO32 2DH

Proposal: Erection of 70-bed C2 Care Home with new vehicular access to Fieldfare Road

Planning reference: F/23/96629

Design Review Panel Members sitting on the Panel: Jonathan Moore (Chair), Rob Jackson & David Gregory

Council Officers in attendance: Liz Harrison & Gary Osmond

Item presented by: John Bell (ADG Architects)

Declarations of Interest declared: None

Comments:

Very little information was provided as to the design strategy for the scheme or how it has reached its current iteration. Mention was made of requests from the Council's design team and Tree Officer to revise the position of the building to better present to the street and provide greater protection for important trees. However, these amendments have done little to improve the overall quality of the design and appear to be the latest in a series of changes which are not having a positive impact.

Notwithstanding the officer suggestions, the Panel felt that there were greater fundamental design issues which remain unresolved, the most significant of these being the position of the site access. Its current position is resulting in unnecessary constraints to the site layout. If it can be relocated to the southern side of the site, this opens up far more opportunities for where the building can be positioned and would allow scope for existing concerns to be successfully addressed. However, it does not appear if relocation of the site access has been investigated. Equally, it was not clear from the presentation what other site layout options have been investigated and why they were not progressed.

As the scheme currently stands, there are a number of significant concerns:

Site Layout & Public Realm

Whilst it was acknowledged that the design tries to address the roundabout and main road, this same level of thought has not been brought through to the

other elevations to the east, south and north, which are all equally visible from the public realm. This is also the case with the space between the building and the street, where the very open southern aspect is dominated by a large parking area and the servicing parts of the building.

In terms of form, scale and external appearance, this latest version of the scheme has lost the clear and simple architectural hierarchy and clarity, including the scale of differing elements which were present on the original version included in the presentation. The building is now of a very similar scale and form along its entire length. The elevational treatment appears awkward, having a very disproportionate ratio of brick to windows. This would provide a very heavy, dominating and unpleasant view to the street. Aspects of the roof also appear disproportionately large, possibly as a result of the very deep width of the wings.

External Spaces

The proposed resident garden spaces are small and will be shaded for much if not all of the day due to their northern orientation and the height of the building. This is particularly the case for the one to the east, whilst the one to the west will be dominated by the pair of trees, car park and servicing area.

Although it is accepted that many residents will be bed-bound, this does not mean that the external spaces of the site should not be given equal importance to the internal environment. Opportunities for being outside will benefit residents and their visitors. As such, these spaces need to be attractive and pleasant. The need for securing these external spaces was briefly mentioned, but no indication of how this would be achieved was given. The nature of boundary treatment will be important as this will also impact the external view of the development and the wider public realm. Thought also needs to be given as to maintaining privacy for occupiers in ground floor rooms, whilst still ensuring that they have an attractive outlook.

Internal Environment

Some discussion was had on the quality of the working environment for staff. Presently, all working staff areas are buried within the building. Whilst it is acknowledged their primary role is to look after residents, this work is hard and opportunities for external views and chance to take a breather should be explored.

Equally, and more importantly, the quality of the internal environment for residents needs to be attractive, light and calming. Part of this is through providing good levels of natural light and pleasant external views. Much was made of allowing residents to watch the world go by outside. However, it is unlikely that the very small windows proposed would allow any sort of external view, particularly when sitting up in bed. Windows need to be much larger to allow views down to the street or garden, but also up to the sky. This would greatly improve their wellbeing.

Community Space

It was unclear what the purpose of the community space is or why it has been incorporated into the scheme as proposed. By being physically separated in the manner shown, it could very easily end up being unused. This space would be far better if it were properly integrated into the main care home. If accessible from the main reception and café space, it would allow it to be used by residents, as well as external groups.

Conclusion:

Although the attempts to address comments raised by Council officers are acknowledged, there are greater fundamental issues of the site access and layout which need to be resolved first. Only then can the other design aspects be considered and developed further. As currently proposed, the scheme fails to adequately take into account the site's constraints and opportunities, address the surrounding public realm in an appropriate manner, or to provide the quality of environment for vulnerable and frail residents and the staff and families who are caring for them.