

Urban Design Comments:

F/23/96629 – Land at Fieldfare Road, adjacent to the roundabout with Winchester Road

From: Urban & Landscape Design Team to Development Management

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Date: 23 July 2024

Proposal: Erection of 70-bed C2 Care Home incorporating an ancillary Community Hub with new vehicular access to Knot Road (AMENDED DESCRIPTION)

These comments are made in relation to the plans dated 15 and 18 July 2024 and should be read in conjunction with comments from the Landscape, Tree and Ecology Officers.

1. General comments

The site is currently undeveloped and is encompassed by an underlying outline permission (O/15/75953) for mixed use land.

As previously mentioned, the proposed building was considered to be large and bulky, leaving too little space for landscape. It is important to break up the visual dominance of the building and this should be done primarily through the massing rather than just elevational treatments and materials.

Therefore, it was felt that the quantum of development should be revisited to allow for a slightly more relaxed scheme with greater emphasis on achieving a well-designed place.

The site is in a prominent location and as a result all street elevations need to be well-designed to address all aspects facing the street.

The treatment of external spaces is crucial, both for the amenity of the future residents and the overall appearance of the development and it should be a driver in the design and layout of the site, particularly given the additional challenges of noise and pollution from the busy roundabout.

The proposal has positively evolved to address some of the concerns raised throughout the planning process and now it is considered to be more consistent on some of the topics.

Further design development was required to reduce the building mass and ensure that it integrates better within the urban grain of the surrounding area. The overall height of the building has been reduced and has introduced more variations of height. Also, the eaves have been lowered to a 2.5 storey building lessening the perceived scale and prominence of the building.

Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed outdoor amenity space has improved significantly given that the eastern leg of the building has been angled further away, creating a large and more peaceful courtyard space. The new alignment of the roundabout also contributes to the feeling of a larger area of external space. However, as the roundabout is outside the boundary line, it would be encouraged to investigate how accurate the new road layout is to ensure that there will be space to angle the leg of the building within the site.

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Improvements have been made on the elevations treatment by rationalising the rhythm and proportions of the proposed openings as well as the variation to the palette of materials and textures, which provides a better articulation and helps breaking up the bulkiness of the building. The approach of having brick on the ground floor, around the whole building, mimicking a plinth, helps to unify the scheme. Also, the gables proposed with different materials and with a hierarchy of windows creates a more balanced and legible façade.

It is welcomed that communal uses have been incorporated within the building. It is considered that the amended western elevation is a huge improvement comparing to previous iterations. Proposing gables with windows towards this side of the building provides natural surveillance to the parking court whilst enhancing the scheme by treating equally all elevations of the building. The entrance to the community hub is also more legible and clearly defined to welcome the proposed pedestrian entrance with a raised footpath.

The flat roof dormers are also welcomed as they provide a contemporary style which matches the dark timber cladding option.

However, there are still a few concerns that require more consideration.

The parking court - It is noted that an effort has been made to soften the area, however the tree planting should be provided between parking bays in accordance with the Quality Places SPD, rather than on the periphery of the area, to create a car 'park'. These trees will establish more easily if they are planted within generous soft landscape strips.

Also, the CGI view from the parking court towards the Community Hub entrance shows a few trees to soften the area that are not indicated on the Landscape Plan and there doesn't seem to be space enough for them to establish.

The design of the angled balconies adds mass to the built form and connects two of the gables making this part of the building bulkier which is undesirable on such a visible area.

It is acknowledged that south facing balconies contribute to the outdoor amenity space of the development; however, it would be encouraged to propose a lighter and more glazed structure to reduce the visual impact from the road.

Lastly, as the building will be seen from the public realm, it is encouraged to propose brick wall around the whole site.