

WINCHESTER & EASTLEIGH DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting: 11/03/2025

Site: Land East of Chickenhall Lane, Eastleigh, SO50 6AF

Proposal: Construction of a 70-bed care home (Use Class C2), with associated parking, landscaping, access, drainage, and other associated works following demolition of existing structures

Planning reference: F/24/99878

Design Review Panel Members sitting on the Panel: Jonathan Moore (Chair), Andrew Hoare, Paul Bulkeley & Jeremy Tyrrell

Council Officers in attendance: Rebecca Altman & Gary Osmond

Item presented by: Andy Plaice (Harris Irwin Architects) & Martin Hawthorne (Highwood)

Declarations of Interest declared: None

Comments:

Landscape Impact:

Notwithstanding the planning policy position in relation to the site being outside the urban edge and within the settlement gap, the Panel did raise landscape impact concerns at introducing such a large building within the narrowest part of the gap. Any existing structures within the gap are of a much smaller scale and height, including the sports pavilion on the northern side of Bishopstoke Road. Whilst it was acknowledged that there is a reasonable level of tree cover along the eastern edge of the site and the southern side of Bishopstoke Road, which would provide a degree of screening, no evidence was presented to clearly demonstrate that views of the building would not be visible from further east along Bishopstoke Road or the Itchen Way. Although much of the building would probably be screened, it was considered likely that the roof would be visible above these trees when viewed from a distance.

Whilst much was made of the building being screened when viewed from the east, little was discussed with regards to what other views of the site would be available, in particular from the Bishopstoke Road roundabout and from Chickenhall Lane itself. The only available natural screening from these viewpoints is the existing boundary hedge, some of which may need to be removed for future highway improvements to the roundabout. This could open up the whole site to clear views from Bishopstoke Road. As such, the

proposals need to include new tree and landscape boundary planting, which appears to be feasible even with the gas main easement. This easement and the other site constraints need to be included within a landscape strategy for the site, which considers the wider impact of the scheme and not just the standard landscape planting around the building.

Layout, Scale, Mass & Form:

The general site layout appears to be sensible and probably the only workable solution given the site constraints. However, it was questioned whether the 'L' shaped footprint needs to be followed so rigidly. Whilst it was acknowledged that the original height had been reduced from four to three storeys, the physical scale of the building was still a concern, not helped by its unrelieved flat roof form which only serves to emphasize the mass of the building. Whilst some suggested changes to the elevations were put forward by the applicant, it was not considered that these would really address the issue of how the building would be viewed against the skyline, particularly from the roundabout. A variation in roof height and form would work far more successfully, as would splitting the two wings of the building in some way, perhaps to provide a main and subservient wing.

The site layout also needs to take into account possible future flooding issues. It was unclear from the drawings presented where existing and future flood zone boundaries are and how the development would be protected.

Appearance & Context:

It was unclear why such a strong flat roof form has been chosen, particularly considering this is not a form prevalent within the surrounding context. Pitched roofs and gables are the prevailing roof form in the locality, even for the neighbouring modern industrial buildings on the opposite side of Chickenhall Lane. Gables had been considered on past versions of the scheme but were not followed through. Instead that proposed is of a fairly generic architectural style which does not really respond to its surrounding context or the character of the site.

Elevationally, the scheme is relatively bland, despite the intended use of brick detailing. However, this is likely more a result of the shape and mass of the building and its unbroken roofline. Architectural interest needs to come from the form of the building, not purely the detail applied to it. It was also questioned whether applying metal cladding to reflect the neighbouring industrial sheds was appropriate for what is a residential building.

Amenity:

Whilst the Panel did not go into detail in terms of the internal layout of the building, a number of concerns were raised in relation to the outlook from some bedrooms and communal living spaces. The enclosure of the north facing courtyard with a wall was questioned. Given that this courtyard space would receive very little in the way of sunlight or daylight, why enclose it

further, particularly when it appears to be one of the few parts of the building with a good view of the river.

The south facing garden space appeared to be squeezed into the space available, and it was unclear what purpose the land to the south of the application site would serve. Equally, the garden space to the west would not have the greatest of outlooks and would be very noisy given its proximity to Chickehall Lane and HGV parking.

Conclusion:

Whilst it was acknowledged that the site is in a sustainable location close to Eastleigh Town Centre, it was questioned whether developing the site is appropriate. Chickenhall Lane provides a clear demarcation between the built edge of Eastleigh to the west and the river valley to the east. By developing this site, particularly with a building of the scale and height proposed, this clear edge would be lost.

Notwithstanding, if the site is to be developed and the integrity of the settlement gap eroded, it needs to be by a high quality scheme which enhances the locality and picks up on the best of the local context. However, that presented does not achieve this and requires significant reworking, particularly in terms of form, scale, mass and elevational composition as well as further work on developing a landscape strategy which both softens the visual impact upon the locality, as well as creating an appropriate setting for the development.