

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

App Ref: 220218/FUL

Address: 65 Northcourt Avenue

Proposal: Construction of a 13 bedroom building (C2 use) with ancillary accommodation and associated works

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Extended Target Decision Date: 21/12/22

SITE DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDING AREA

The application site is Northcourt Lodge Nursing Home which is currently a 22 bedroom care home. The care home accommodates registered care categories such as dementia, Alzheimer's, cancer care, other specialist care for people over the age of 65 and more recently requests for long term COVID beds as well as respite beds. The home is located on a large plot and bound by residential properties on Wellington Avenue, Shinfield Road and Northcourt Avenue.

The care home has been extended in the past and is a two storey rectangular shaped building with some attractive features to the original building. A car park is located to the north of the building.

PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the construction of a two storey detached building within the grounds of the existing nursing home to provide an additional 13 bedrooms.

Planning permission has been granted for a 15 bed care home with ancillary accommodation (see planning history). The scheme has been reduced to 13 bedrooms to improve bedroom sizes.

The proposal involves a new driveway within the site, additional parking, planting and landscaping. The materials consist of brick (and render to the top of the gables) and tiles.

SUBMITTED PLANS AND DOCUMENTS:

0001 - Site Location Plan
101 - Existing Floor Plans
102 - Existing Elevations
100 Rev A - Existing Site Plan
111 - Proposed Northcourt Lodge Elevations
110 Rev F - Proposed Site Plan
Supporting Letter
Application Form
CIL Form
114 Rev F - Proposed Street Scene & Site Sections
115 Rev C - Building Sections
112 Rev D - Proposed Floor Plans
113 Rev D - Proposed Elevations

Received 17th February 2022

PLAN 05500/2021 - BS:5837 Tree Protection Plan

PLAN 05500/2021 - Tree Plan

Arboricultural Report prepared by Duckworths Arboriculture dated January 2021 Ref: SCD 05500/2021

Sustainability Statement

Planning, Design & Access Statement

Received 1st April 2022

PLANNING HISTORY

201141/FUL - Construction of a 15 bedroom building (C2 use) with ancillary accommodation and associated works - Application Permitted

89/00408/FUL (Civica Ref: 891329) - Erection of front and side two storey extension to existing nursing home for the elderly. Refused 27/07/1989.

89/01365/FUL (Civica Ref: 891331) - Erection of rear first floor extension to existing nursing home. Permitted 12/04/1990.

97/00036/FUL (Civica Ref: 960712) - Installation of two storey lift enclosure at the rear of Northcourt Lodge Rest Home to serve the ground and first floor. Permitted 18/02/1997.

00/00249/FUL (Civica Ref: 990783) - New two storey house. Refused 28/04/2000.

01/01138/FUL (Civica Ref: 010126) - Erection of single storey extension forming a garden room on the south side of the elderly care home. Permitted 26/10/2001.

03/00717/FUL (Civica Ref: 030203) - First floor rear extension and two storey side extension to provide store and enclosed staircase to first floor. Permitted 12/09/2003.

05/00927/FUL (Civica Ref: 050070) - Single storey ground floor rear extension to provide 10 additional bedrooms to existing care home. Withdrawn 30/09/2005.

06/00280/FUL (Civica Ref: 060477) - Retrospective application for first floor rear extension to provide 7 additional bedrooms to existing care home. Permitted 18/08/2006.

CONSULTATIONS

Internal consultation:

Transport - No objection subject to conditions

Natural Environment - No objection subject to conditions

Environmental Protection - No objection subject to conditions

Thames Water - No comments received

External consultation:

The following addresses were consulted via letter:

Wellington Avenue - 9, 11, 11A, 15 and 17
Shinfield Road - 64, 66, 68, 68A and 68B

Northcourt Avenue - 32A, 34, 36, 38, 67, 69

A site notice was also displayed.

No comments have been received.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN15: Air Quality
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H6: Accommodation For Vulnerable People
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

Supplementary planning documents/guidance

Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (2019)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (2020)

APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact on the surrounding area
- Impact on neighbouring properties and future occupiers
- Traffic generation and parking
- Landscaping
- Sustainability
- Other Matters

Principle of development

Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable particularly where this will involve co-

location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, such as schools and healthcare uses will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan. Paragraph 4.7.4 of Policy OU1 continues that *“given the dense, built up nature of Reading and the lack of appropriate new sites, it is inevitable that some of the Borough’s community facility needs will have to be met through intensification of the use of existing sites”*.

Policy H6 (Accommodation for Vulnerable People) states that “provision will be made for at least an additional 253 residential care bedspaces for elderly people between 2013 and 2036”. Although the care provided at 65 Northcourt Avenue is not specifically for elderly people i.e. sheltered housing, it does provide specific care for people over 65 which fall within care categories such as dementia, Alzheimer’s and cancer along with other specialist care and more recently long term COVID beds as well as respite beds. The site is within an existing care home and would provide extended and improved community facilities which would meet an identified need within the Borough. As such it is considered that the general principle of increased care home provision is in accordance with Policies OU1 and H6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Design and impact on the surrounding area

The proposal is for a two storey detached building with a pitched roof located at the rear of the site. The proposed building is rectangular in shape and has a two storey front and rear projection.

The proposed building is set back from Northcourt Avenue by approximately 40m and the front of the site is screened by street trees, hedging and vegetation along the front boundary. The proposed building will be significantly screened from Northcourt Avenue and would not have a significant impact on the appearance of the street scene. There is also dense and mature vegetation along the south and east boundaries as shown on the photograph below.



Photo showing the rear of the site with the southern boundary on the right

Compared to the previously approved scheme, the development now incorporates a double gable, additional rooflights and the maximum depth of the building has increased by 2m. The overall scale and design is considered acceptable with suitable spacing around the building. The proposed materials consist of brick with the top section of the gables rendered and tiles

to the roof. Although less decorative than the existing building it is an ancillary addition at the rear of the site which does not compete with the attractive frontage of the original building. It is acknowledged that this is a large addition to the site however taking into consideration the benefits of the scheme by providing additional bed spaces which would meet an identified need within the Borough, the significant set back from Northcourt Avenue and the large size of the existing plot, on balance, the proposal is not considered to detract from the character and appearance of the area and is in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Impact on neighbouring properties and future occupants

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:

- o Privacy and overlooking;
- o Access to sunlight and daylight;
- o Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- o Harm to outlook;
- o Noise and disturbance;
- o Artificial lighting;
- o Vibration;
- o Dust and fumes;
- o Smell;
- o Crime and safety; or
- o Wind

Impact on neighbouring properties

The proposed building is approximately 10m from the boundaries of properties on Wellington Avenue and Shinfield Road and the distance between the proposed building and the rear of these properties is approximately 23m and 30m respectively. There is substantial screening in the form of dense and mature vegetation along the boundary with the properties on Shinfield Road as shown on the photograph above. There is less mature dense screening provided along the boundary with properties on Wellington Avenue although there are trees along this boundary as shown on the photograph below. Although there is adequate distance between the proposed building and the rear of properties on Wellington Avenue, Officers consider additional planting to this boundary would be beneficial as there is no planting along this boundary within the application site. This additional planting can be secured by condition. It is likely that the residents of the properties on Wellington Avenue will have clearer views of the proposed building than those on Shinfield Road however the distance of approximately 23m side to rear along with new planting is considered to reduce the impact of the proposal on the residents of these properties. As such the proposal is not considered overbearing or visually dominant on the residents of these neighbouring properties.



Photo showing the boundary with the rear of properties on Wellington Avenue

The proposed building is 1.5m from the boundary with the neighbouring property at 67 Northcourt Avenue however there is a distance of approximately 25m from the front of the proposed building and the rear of this neighbouring property and there is substantial dense and mature vegetation along the boundary. New planting is also proposed along this boundary. 67 Northcourt Avenue has a long rear garden and the proposed building would be located at the rear of it. Although the residents of this neighbouring property will notice the additional height and depth of the proposal the distance between the two buildings means the proposal would not be overbearing and with the existing and proposed planting although visible it is not considered visually dominant.

The proposal will be visible from neighbouring properties but as mentioned above there is sufficient distance between the proposed building and neighbouring properties to ensure there is no harm to outlook and this is further reduced by the dense mature vegetation along the south and east boundaries and proposed planting to the north boundary. Due to the orientation of, and distances between, the properties on Northcourt Avenue, Shinfield Road and Wellington Avenue the proposal is also not considered to have an impact on these neighbouring properties in terms of loss of sunlight and daylight.

The window location in the proposed building has been carefully considered to respect the privacy of neighbouring properties as best it can whilst ensuring each proposed bedroom has the benefit of a window. Windows are proposed to all four elevations. There are front facing first floor windows, with views in to the garden, and one of which is close to the boundary with 67 Northcourt Avenue and there is one side window facing the boundary with 67 Northcourt Avenue. However, taking into consideration the dense vegetation along this boundary and the additional planting proposed it is not considered that this arrangement would be harmful to the residents of this neighbouring property due to the distances afforded and the screening provided. The layout is also comparable to the previously approved scheme.

Two bedroom windows and two landing windows are proposed to the rear elevation facing the properties on Shinfield Road but this elevation is staggered and there is a substantial separation distance between the proposal and these neighbouring properties and as such there is not considered to be any impact on the residents of these properties in terms of overlooking and loss of privacy.

One first floor side window is proposed to bedroom 13 which is located towards the boundary with Wellington Avenue however this is a secondary window to this bedroom and plans indicate that obscure glazing to the bottom of the pane will be used. Taking into consideration the distances between the proposal and the neighbouring properties, existing and proposed planting and the use of obscure glazing, albeit to the bottom half of the window, this is considered to protect the privacy of the residents of neighbouring properties and the proposal is not considered harmful in terms of loss of privacy and overlooking.

For the reasons given above the proposal is considered in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the living environment of neighbouring properties in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of the development and harm to outlook.

Impact on future occupants

Although there is no specific policy for bedroom sizes in care homes, as a comparison Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) states that in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom should have a floor area of at least 7.5sqm and be at least 2.15m wide. All the proposed rooms measure between 14-16sqm and are a minimum of 2.5m wide. The scheme of room sizes is below:

Residential Care Home Schedule (Class C2)

Bedroom 1	13.06m ²
Bedroom 2	17.74m ²
Bedroom 3	13.38m ²
Bedroom 4	12.55m ²
Bedroom 5	12.69m ²
Bedroom 6	12.66m ²
Bedroom 7	12.75m ²
Bedroom 8	12.29m ²
Bedroom 9	13.34m ²
Bedroom 10	16.43m ²
Bedroom 11	14.32m ²
Bedroom 12	16.58m ²
Bedroom 13	14.14m ²
Total	181.93m ²

It is acknowledged that bedroom 3 on the ground floor and bedroom 13 on the first floor will be opposite the rear elevation of the main building as the proposal slightly overlaps the existing building at the rear. However, both bedrooms have secondary windows to the north elevation, which provides additional light. There is a 2m gap between the proposal and the existing building and views in to the garden will still be possible and due to the orientation will also receive natural light. There will be no overlooking or loss of privacy with bedrooms in the existing building as they do not directly face the proposed windows.

Bedroom 6 on the ground floor and bedroom 9 on the first floor will face the boundary with 67 Northcourt Avenue. As bedroom 9 is at first floor this bedroom will benefit from adequate views and light. This will be more limited for bedroom 6 due to it being at ground floor level and facing the side boundary. However, through the landscaping condition it can be ensured that the planting and existing vegetation is sufficiently away from this window and although views from this window will be limited, on balance, taking the benefits of the scheme as a whole into consideration, this alone is not considered a reason for refusing the application.

With regards to amenity space, Policy H6 amongst other things states *“development for specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will fulfil the following criteria....development will incorporate areas of green space, which are particularly important for many groups of vulnerable people”*. As mentioned previously the home provides care for a wide range of needs, including more recently COVID related needs. Although the proposed building will occupy a large part of the rear garden there is considered to be sufficient garden space remaining. Officers consider the landscaping scheme proposed is an improvement on the existing garden layout and provides additional planting and seating areas. The care home will have its own safeguarding policies in place to ensure their residents do not come to any harm. As such the proposal is considered in accordance with Policy H6.

The proposal has been carefully assessed and although there may be some minor deficiencies as noted above, on balance, the proposal is considered to provide a scheme that looks after the wellbeing of its residents, existing and proposed, and meets an identified need within the Borough.

Traffic generation and parking

Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. The Council has produced a Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which includes different standards in four different zones according to the accessibility of those zones. The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route', which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities. The closest bus stops are situated on Shinfield Road (A327), approximately 220 metres from the entrance of the site.

In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 per FTE staff & 1 per 4 residents.

It is noted that under this current application, the number of bedrooms has been decreased compared to the previous scheme (decreased from 15 to 13), and a total of 7 parking spaces will be provided (the same number secured under application 201141). Provision should also be made for an electric vehicle charging point which should be covered by condition.

Under the previous application, the applicant indicated that the visiting policy is by appointment only and these will be on a staggered basis which controls the demand for parking spaces. Therefore, to ensure that the applicant is committed to managing the on-site parking spaces, a car park management plan will be conditioned to ensure that there is no additional overspill onto the surrounding roads.

In terms of access, the new parking spaces will utilize the existing vehicular access from Northcourt Avenue. No additional access will be introduced on Northcourt Avenue.

In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 cycle parking space per full time employed staff; the application form states 4 full time staff will be employed and therefore 4 spaces will be required. The Design & Access Statement indicates that secure, enclosed cycle storage has been provided within the development for staff use. However, we require detailed plans confirming that the cycle parking provision meets the Council's adopted standards in terms of number of spaces and layout. This can be secured via condition.

In view of the above the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policies TR3 and TR% of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) subject to the following conditions:

- Construction Method Statement (to be submitted)
- Vehicle parking (as specified)
- Cycle parking (to be approved)
- Car management plan
- EV Charging points

Landscaping

A Tree Survey, Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Report have been submitted which clearly indicates the retained trees and the trees to be removed. The submitted information defines a thorough protection strategy for the retained trees and provisions the appropriate phasing of works and demonstrates the natural environment and landscaping principles considered and which meet the necessary criteria. Although in terms of quantity and maintenance the principles of tree planting are met a landscaping condition will be imposed to ensure the replacement species are more appropriate and have a biodiversity value.

Although there is significant tree and hedge coverage along the south and east boundaries there is less cover along the northern boundary with the rear of properties on Wellington Avenue. Officers consider that there is scope for additional planting along this boundary and this would be required in a submission to discharge the above landscaping condition. Subject to the conditions outlined above the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policies and guidance and is considered acceptable in landscaping terms in accordance with Policy En14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Sustainability

Policy CC2 states that *“Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.”*

The development is classified as a minor non-residential development (as it does not fall within use class C3) therefore the development is required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard as a minimum.

This will be secured via condition.

Other matters

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Although the proposed scheme would be CIL liable development, the development falls into the ‘Care Homes’ category. As such the development would be CIL liable, but zero rate.

Equalities Impact

When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this

planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development.

Recommendation: **GRANT** subject to conditions and informatives

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials to be approved
4. North facing side window will be obscure
5. Hours of construction
6. CMS
7. No burning waste
8. Refuse and recycling details
9. Vehicle parking
10. Cycle parking
11. Car Parking Management Plan
12. EV Charging Points
13. Hard and soft landscaping
14. Protective measures - landscaping
15. BREEAM - Interim
16. BREEAM - Post
17. Restricted to C2 use

INFORMATIVES

1. Terms
2. Building Control
3. Complaints about construction
4. Pre-commencement conditions
5. Highways
6. Don't damage the verge
7. Public sewers
8. Thames Water
9. Positive and Proactive