

- a) **DOV/21/00805 – Conversion of existing building to four self-contained apartments for supported housing, erection of a replacement side extension and other external alterations - Victoria House, 101 Sandwich Road, Whitfield**

Reason for report – Called in by Cllr N Collor and number of Objections (11)

- b) **Summary of Recommendation**

Planning permission be approved.

- c) **Planning Policy and Guidance**

Core Strategy Policies (2010)(CS)

DM1, DM13

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

7, 8, 11, 62, 130

Draft Dover District Local Plan

The Consultation Draft Dover District Local Plan is a material planning consideration in the determination of this planning application. At this stage in the plan making process however the policies of the draft Plan have little weight and are not considered to materially affect the assessment of this application and the recommendation as set out.

- d) **Relevant Planning History**

96/00611	Creation of window at first floor level in eastern elevation	Granted
92/01175	Change of use to children's home	Granted
90/01179	change of use from garage to dwelling	Granted
90/00781	change of use to childrens' home	Granted
90/00533	change of use from garage to dwelling	Refused
89/01361	change of use to residential home for the elderly	Granted
88/01211	the change of use of 3 ground floor rooms to offices	Granted
87/01272	erection of a bungalow with detached garage	Granted
87/00608	erection of a double garage	Granted
86/0121	bungalow and detached garage	Granted

- e) **Consultee and Third-Party Responses**

KCC Highways: The proposal is outside of the remit for comment.

Whitfield Parish Council – No objection to this application. However, adequate parking should be provided on site for residents, staff and visitors including additional vehicles such as deliveries and emergency vehicles. Sandwich Road is a very busy road, so off street parking is essential. They have also noted concerns for local drainage capacity which should be addressed.

Third Party Representations:

11 objections to the proposal have been received and the material considerations are summarised below. Matters such as impact on an individuals' property value, financial intentions of the applicant etc. are not material planning considerations and are not included below.

- How many occupants will there be?
- Adequate parking must be provided.
- What can be done to prevent anti-social behaviour and noise experienced during the previous use?
- Neighbour amenity impacted by the proposed single storey extension.
- Will add extra pressure to local surgery.
- Concerns about highway safety impacts.
- Could increase noise levels.
- Unit 3 does not meet Flat Conversion Guidance.

f) **1. The Site and the Proposal**

1.1 The application site is a former children's home which provided 8 bedrooms of accommodation and a number of shared communal spaces. It is a detached, 3-storey property which sits on the western side of Sandwich Road south of the junction with Nursery Lane. There are dwellings to the north and south of the application site as well as to the rear (west) in Nursery Lane. It shares a vehicle access with the immediate neighbours; 101a and 99a Sandwich Road but has its own parking area with at least 5 existing spaces and garden space to the north and west of the main building.

1.2 The proposal seeks to change the use of this former children's home to supported adult accommodation (18-65 years of age) to be housed in 4no. flats (with a total of 8no. bedrooms across the entire building) adapted to meet the needs of the potential tenants. All but one flat would be shared occupancy. The adults in question have learning disabilities and require support to live independently which would be provided by 24hr care support on the site. There would be one tenant per bedroom with a total potential of 8no. individuals residing at the site. Support staff would be provided with their own staff room and shower facilities but would not live at the site.

1.3 The exterior of the existing building will remain largely unchanged apart from a single storey side extension which would be rebuilt on a slightly enlarged footprint and finished in materials to match the host building (render and white uPVC windows and doors). Windows and doors would be replaced on a like-for-like basis, but no new openings or windows would be formed at first or second floor levels. An area of hardstanding would allow parking for 7 vehicles and would be formed from the current parking areas. It is expected the majority of the residents would not have their own vehicles. Car parking would be provided for staff and visitors, with parking for residents if needed. The vehicle access to Sandwich Road would not be changed. This is looked at in more detail in section 2.6 below.

- 1.4 The description of the proposal had to be changed during the course of consideration as the originally proposed Use Class was not correct for the submitted works. As such, a revised consultation process was undertaken. No new material considerations were raised.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The main issues for consideration are:
- Principle of the development
 - Impact on the Street Scene
 - Impact on Residential Amenity
 - Highway Considerations

Assessment

Principle of Development

- 2.2 The site is within the settlement confines of Whitfield and as such, the proposal would comply with Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy (CS), subject to other material considerations. It should be noted that the previous use was for a children's home and as such, this form of supported housing would not be being introduced to the site or the area.

Impact on the Street Scene

- 2.3 The application site is visible from Sandwich Road, albeit set well back from the highway. Distance views are limited by the existing built form and vegetation around the application site. The replacement of windows and doors on a largely like-for-like basis would be unlikely to result in any visual impact on the street scene. The proposed side extension would not be visible in public views and as such, would have no impact on the street scene. Regardless, the use of matching materials and the modest increase in footprint of the side extension would be unlikely to result in an incongruous or insubordinate addition to the property. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would not result in harm to the visual amenity of the street scene and would comply with Paragraph 130 of the NPPF in this regard. It is noted that there are no details of bin or bicycle storage provision on the site or details of bin collection arrangements. The site has generous grounds, much of which is laid to hardstanding. Details of this provision can be secured by condition.

Impact on Residential Amenity

- 2.4 There are two parts to assessing residential amenity; the impact on existing residential amenities, and the amenity of future occupiers of the development. The 4no. flats have been designed to provide adequate space for the future occupiers, including a wheelchair user, and the proposed room sizes comply with national space standards. As far as amenity for future occupiers, given the varied flat layouts and room sizes, there would likely be appropriate accommodation for the target users who may have some physical challenges, but the majority will be fully ambulatory. As the building was a dwelling and then a children's home, with no new windows/doors being proposed, (apart from the proposed single storey ground floor side extension) the change of use of the building would not result in any amenity impacts in terms of overlooking/interlooking or loss of

privacy. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would result in a good standard of accommodation for future occupiers.

- 2.5 As previously noted, the external alterations are limited largely to window and door replacements. Therefore, any impact would be neutral. The proposed replacement single storey side extension would introduce new openings but all of these, apart from a ground floor window serving the kitchen/living room of Unit2, would not directly impact an existing neighbouring property. The southern facing window would look towards the side/rear elevation No.99a which is sited a distance of 3.0m beyond the shared boundary (approximately 6m between the proposed window new ground floor window and the side-facing window of No.99a). In addition, it is considered that the retention of the existing boundary treatment of a 1.8m high brick boundary wall and mature shrubs would ensure that this window would not result in an unacceptable level of overlooking, interlooming or loss of privacy to No.99a. Being sited north of this neighbouring property, the extension would also be unlikely to result in any loss of light or be overbearing in terms of residential amenity. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would comply with paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF and would result in no unacceptable impacts on existing residential amenities.

Highway Considerations

- 2.6 Car parking for up to 7no. vehicles will be provided on-site. Based on the guidance in Policy DM13 of the Core Strategy, a 2-bedroom flat in this area would require 1no. parking space. As such, a total of 4 car parking spaces out of the 7 proposed, would be available to the residents which would comply with Policy DM13. The additional parking spaces would provide parking for both staff and visitors. The site is close to a bus stop with a regular service through Whitfield, to the White Cliffs Business Park and into the Dover and Deal. It is therefore considered that adequate and sufficient car parking spaces have been provided for the proposed use and intended end users which would be unlikely to result in increased parking pressure locally. Due to the above, and with no change to the existing vehicular access arrangements the proposal is considered to raise no additional highway safety concerns and would accord with the NPPF in this regard.

Other Matters

- 2.7 Concerns have been raised by third parties in relation to previous anti-social behaviour from former residents of the site, when it was in use as a children's home. The children's home was under both different owners and management. Further confirmation has been sought from the applicants about how this would be avoided and how this could be managed. Good behaviour is part of the tenancy agreements with any prospective occupier of the flats and will be further controlled by the 24hr support teams. This is considered to be an acceptable arrangement to safeguard against undue noise or other anti-social behaviour of the residents. Further, a condition requiring further details of arrangements and the submission of a management plan could satisfactorily address these concerns. This would enable adjacent residents to be provided with a contact person/number should any issues arise and a protocol for how these complaints would be dealt with. With the inclusion of such a condition, it is considered that this concern can be addressed adequately from a planning perspective.

- 2.8 Further, concerns have been raised with regard to the capacity of the existing foul water drainage system as it was installed for a single dwelling and not only has the use changed within the building, but also two additional dwellings have been built on former garden land previously associated with the host building. This however is considered to have a limited impact on capacity as the two additional dwellings would have their own independent systems and connections to the network. Whereas, the application building has an existing foul drainage connection to the mains sewerage network, and it is unlikely the proposal would result in increased drainage pressure over the former children's home use. For these reasons, capacity could not be considered a significant material planning consideration on this occasion.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, Regulation 63: Appropriate Assessment

- 2.9 All impacts of the development have been considered and assessed. It is concluded that the only aspect of the development that causes uncertainty regarding the likely significant effects on a European Site is the potential disturbance of birds due to increased recreational activity at Sandwich Bay and Pegwell Bay.
- 2.10 Detailed surveys at Sandwich Bay and Pegwell Bay were carried out in 2011, 2012 and 2018. However, applying a precautionary approach and with the best scientific knowledge in the field, it is not currently possible to discount the potential for housing development within Dover district, when considered in combination with all other housing development within the district, to have a likely significant effect on the protected Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and Ramsar sites.
- 2.11 Following consultation with Natural England, the identified pathway for such a likely significant effect is an increase in recreational activity which causes disturbance, predominantly by dog-walking, of the species which led to the designation of the sites and the integrity of the sites themselves.
- 2.12 The Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and Ramsar Mitigation Strategy was agreed with Natural England in 2012 and is still considered to be effective in preventing or reducing the harmful effects of housing development on the sites.
- 2.13 Given the limited scale of the development proposed by this application, a contribution towards the Councils Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and Ramsar Mitigation Strategy will not be required as the costs of administration would negate the benefit of collecting a contribution. However, the development would still be mitigated by the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and Ramsar Mitigation Strategy as the Council will draw on existing resources to fully implement the agreed Strategy.
- 2.14 Having had regard to the proposed mitigation measures, it is considered that the proposal would not have a likely significant adverse effect on the integrity of the protected Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and Ramsar sites. The mitigation measures (which were agreed following receipt of ecological advice and in consultation with Natural England) will ensure that the harmful effects on the designated site, caused by recreational activities from existing and new residents, will be effectively managed.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The proposed change of use of the site to allow for 4 flats (up to 8 residents) as supported housing for adults and the single storey ground floor extension and external alterations would not result in any harm to the visual amenity of the street scene or to existing or future residential amenities. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would comply with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and the CS and the application is recommended for approval.

g) Recommendation

- I Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:
- 1) 3-year commencement
 - 2) Approved plans
 - 3) Materials to match existing
 - 4) Car parking shown on approved plans to be provided prior to first use
 - 5) Details of refuse and bicycle storage facilities
 - 6) No further alterations, extensions, new windows, outbuildings – Remove PD;
 - 7) No permitted change of use even within Use Class – Remove PD
 - 8) Submission of a noise/occupation management plan to outline points of contact and protocols for dealing with complaints along with staffing numbers and hours.
- II Powers to be delegated to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Development to settle any necessary planning conditions in line with the issues set out in the recommendation and as resolved by the Planning Committee.

Case Officer

Andrew Wallace