

COMMITTEE DATE: 23/04/2018

APPLICATION NO: 18/0128/FUL
APPLICANT: Mr Zachary Stretch
PROPOSAL: Change of use from dwelling to supported living accommodation for six residents and staff facilities (sui generis use)
LOCATION: 16-18 Wrefords Close
Exeter
Devon
EX4 5AY

REGISTRATION DATE: 22/01/2018
EXPIRY DATE:

SITE HISTORY

REFERENCE	PROPOSAL	DECISION	DATE
13/5099/FUL	Construction of a two storey extension	PER	14.01.2014
13/3599/FUL	Installation of raised decking	PER	01.11.2013
94/0326/FUL	Enclosure of balconies to form conservatory	PER	18.07.1994

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The application site is a pair of rendered semi-detached properties, located in a residential estate near the roundabout at Cowley Bridge. The two houses were knocked into one by the previous owner who was elderly and had a carer. The property has been extended in the past with a two storey side extension.

The application is for change of use from dwelling to supported living accommodation for six residents and staff facilities (sui generis use) and minor alterations to the lower ground floor to create habitable space. The proposal includes three parking spaces and a drop off area. The prospective residents have a variety of disabilities and have requested independent units with their own front door. The residents would be supported by carers, with one member of staff staying overnight.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

Supporting statement provided by SENSE (care provider)

16-18 Wrefords Close will provide specialist support for six individuals, enabling them to live in the community which will enable them to integrate, have wider social networks and make a positive contribution to the local community. This project will meet identified gaps in current provision for this group of individuals in the community. We are working with individuals and their families to ensure Wrefords Close will be suitable for their future needs.

The project fits with the strategy on providing modern accommodation in the community. Residents have been moved a number of times in recent years due to short term leases and personal reasons of the current landlord. The proposal for Wrefords Close will provide stability of a long term home and develop daily living skills and independence, as well as living closer to Exeter. All the individuals have links to Exeter, with friends living locally. The individuals are part of a thriving deaf community in Exeter and having easier access would enhance their life chances much more.

The individuals will be supported by a number of staff (all local to Exeter), who will travel to Wrefords Close by various means e.g. public transport and personal vehicles. The staff team will provide 24 hour cover, with a member of staff either providing waking night cover or sleep-in cover using the staff facilities for this duty- this overnight cover usually starts at 10pm and ends at 8am – however this member of staff has usually worked during the day when they stay to provide a sleeping in service in case of emergency. Sense have other offices in Exeter which the staff team will be able to utilise for team meetings, supervisions and other work undertaken by the service manager.

In terms of vehicle movements, none of the 6 people who will be resident/tenant at the property have a vehicle; those living at Wrefords Close will not have a vehicle as some supported living services may have. We have a number of staff who live in Exeter and would prefer to car share or use public transport; others from further out will also manage the use of their car via car sharing or park and ride. We will ensure that the staff are aware of the availability of only 4 spaces on the property and thus the rota will be written to ensure this is the case, staff will be encouraged to use public transport, car pool, walk and cycle.

We do not believe that this supported living service will add any more traffic to the area than the properties remaining as 2 distinct households who may in some cases have a 3 car household. Staff will not be coming and going all day, as the desire of the 6 residents/tenants is to live an ordinary life, making full use of public transport and local facilities. The times that staff support people in their cars are to support to medical appointments such as hospital, GP, dentists and occasional times at work placements. On average, residents have no more than 1 medical appointment every 2 weeks. Staff spend at least 8 hours per day on shift, thus a car is likely to be parked on the designated places for up to 8hours, and at times 1 car might be parked this overnight.

All the staff have had Enhanced DBS checks as part of our safer recruitment process.

Whilst some of the residents/tenants might have a physical disability they are all able to walk to and from the bus stop, they have close links to social networks in Exeter will not impact on their enjoyment of living in Wrefords Close, they want to be good neighbours and where possible play an active role in the local community. They can all manage the steps up to the road to catch the bus, but they are also more than able to walk up the incline and round the road to the bridge again to the bus stop.

REPRESENTATIONS

Objections from 27 addresses, 2 comments. Issues raised:

Highways

- Parking in narrow cul-de-sac
- Emergency vehicle access
- Deliveries
- Staff movements/number of trips/number of visitors
- No pavements in this part of the close

Use

- Not suitable in residential area (deeds/covenant do not permit commercial use)
- Change character of area, typically 3-4 bedroom houses
- Possibility of further change of use/other commercial uses without consent
- Privacy/overlooking (particularly from alterations to lower ground floor accommodation, and changes to room uses)
- Noise disruption
- General disturbance and impact on residential amenity. May affect ability of children to play outside
- Lack of bus services following changes to H route
- Lack of proximity to shops, services and facilities

CONSULTATIONS

DCC Highways

The level of traffic associated with the change of use is unlikely to cause any significant impact on the public highway. Wrefords Close is a residential road, and is situated in an existing residents parking zone (S5) where there is high demand for on street spaces; the applicant is advised that in accordance with current policy additional on street parking permits will not be issued to serve this development. DCC may consider permits that are essential for the day-to-day operation of the units, but this does not include staff members and/or visitors.

There are currently three parking spaces (plus an additional drop-off zone); however, there are a number of limited waiting spaces on Wrefords Drive which could be used for staff/visitors. Given that the site has limited parking facilities, these should be managed by the operator of the supported living accommodation but the lack of parking spaces is not felt to be a reason for refusal. Hence, to promote sustainable transport, secure cycle parking spaces should be provided meeting the standard set out in the Sustainable Transport SPD.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Central Government Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2012

CP4 – Housing density

CP17 – Design and local distinctiveness

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011 Saved Policies

H5 – Diversity of housing

DG4 – Residential layout and amenity

Exeter Development Delivery Document – Publication Version 2015

DD9 Accessible, adaptable and wheelchair user dwellings

DD11 Residential conversions and HMOs

DD13 Residential Amenity

DD25 Design Principles

Exeter City Council Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Transport SPD 2013

OBSERVATIONS

The key considerations of this proposal are the suitability of the location for supported/special needs housing and highways matters.

Paragraph 50 of the NPPF requires a mix of housing to be delivered to meet the needs of different groups in the community including people with disabilities, to create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities. In the supporting text to Policy DD9 and DD11 of the emerging Development Delivery DPD, the Council will ensure development, as far as is reasonable, contributes to meeting the needs of a wide range of people, including older and disabled people, and enable them to live as independently as possible in the community. The conversion of an existing building can make a valuable contribution to housing stock, providing amenity is appropriate and unacceptable highways problems do not result.

The accompanying text of Policy H5 of the Local Plan requires specialist accommodation to have the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable and practical. The policy suggests car ownership amongst people with special needs is low, so development should be located close to local shops and services, community facilities and bus routes. While the Council will promote greater diversity of housing provision, the Council will also consider the impact of the proposal on the residential environment, and the effect on amenity space, parking and traffic safety.

It is acknowledged that the site is not located in close proximity to local shops and services. However, the care provider has confirmed the location is suitable, and tenants are physically able to walk to the bus stop, approximately 60m to the bus stop on Cowley Bridge Road served by route 5 and 55 bus services (approximately 5 buses an hour during the day). Individual care programmes will arrange appropriate access to shops and community services, including medical appointments. While proximity to services is relevant to all local residents, the impact of this distance is likely to depend on mobility and public transport, with some representations mentioning the removal of the H bus route around Wrefords Drive/West Garth Road. Additionally online shopping has become common since the adoption of the local plan, and the requirement in policy to be located near to shops and services is not included in the NPPF or Development DPD.

While the care provider has looked at city centre locations, these have not been suitable for the needs of the tenants. Both the tenants and their families have expressed a wish to live in Exeter and have worked with care provider to meet their needs. Given the abilities and needs of the tenants, the desire to live closer to Exeter and the deaf community, to live independently, and the close proximity of the bus stop, it is considered that the site and its accessibility, are reasonable and practical on this occasion, in accordance with policy H5, DD11 and the NPPF.

It is considered the proposal will not harm the character of the locality, or unacceptably harm neighbours amenity. Based on the supporting statement provided, staff and tenant movements would be no greater than that of two families, or a group of unrelated people, who could lawfully

occupy this pair of dwellings. A member of staff will always be present at the property, and the care provider has an office and day centre in Exeter which the prospective residents already use. The alterations to the lower ground floor are not dissimilar to an integral garage conversion which could be carried out under householder permitted development and are therefore considered acceptable. The proposed supported living accommodation is considered acceptable in this residential location, and any changes would require planning consent due to the sui generis use class proposed.

In terms of Highway matters, the site has room for three off street parking spaces, plus a drop off area and this is considered adequate for the size of property. The care provider has confirmed that four parking spaces is sufficient, and that some staff will cycle, use the bus or car share. Devon County Council Highways Officer does not object to the proposal and states the level of traffic associated with the change of use is unlikely to cause any significant impact on the public highway. Wrefords Close is residential road and is situated in an existing residents parking zone, no additional on street parking permits will be issued. A condition on secure cycle parking is recommended. Based on this, the Council considers there are no Highway issues to warrant refusal.

Based on the above, it is considered that supported residential use, is acceptable in this location, would not harm residential amenity, or cause unacceptable highway problems, and is therefore recommended for approval.

Delegation Briefing 2 April 2018

A pair of semi-detached properties had previously been combined into a single dwelling, the owner having now sold to SENSE who wished to provide six small flats with kitchen and bathrooms provided to enable independent living for those with special needs including people with autism, dyspraxia and those with sight and hearing issues. The view was expressed that the proposal could be acceptable if properly managed. Objections had been received on the following grounds:-

- inappropriate for a residential area;
- additional traffic and impact on highway network;
- changes character of the area which comprises predominantly three and four bedroom houses;
- impact on the privacy of neighbours;
- noise and general disturbance to the residential area;
- lack of bus service; and
- absence of local services to serve the needs of the proposed occupiers.

Members emphasised that the application was in conflict with Policy H5 of the Local Plan which required adequate community and service facilities for occupants with special needs. The only local shop was a farm shop which was some distance away on top of a hill and Stagecoach had recently reduced the H service in this area. The location was at the edge of the City whereas a facility of this nature should be located in the heart of a community and/or nearer the City Centre.

The applicants were seeking an early decision as there was an urgent need for the six units and had pointed out that a number of the objectors did not live in the area. They had also stated that the occupants would have minimal need for the use of parking spaces. It had also been emphasised that a calm location was beneficial to the occupants.

Members were advised in response to queries that there was a turning circle that could accommodate two vehicles and that the occupants would generally be mobile. It was remarked that the County Council should be required to provide any necessary traffic management measures.

Members requested a visit by the site inspection party on 10 April, with the County Council Highways Officer invited, for subsequent consideration by the Planning Committee.

Site Inspection 10 April 2018

Councillors noted the character of the site and surroundings and the details of the proposal. They noted the proposed parking arrangements, the access to the site and the proximity of bus stops. A neighbour approached the visiting party and requested confirmation of the age of occupants, expressing concern about the potential for occupation by unruly young people. Officers confirmed that this information would be requested from the applicant and reported to the Planning Committee. Councillors Mitchell and Owen drew attention to the proposal's possible conflict with policy H5 of Exeter Local Plan due to the lack of facilities in the area. Members noted that the application would be determined by the Planning Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.
Reason: To ensure compliance with sections 91 and 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in strict accordance with the submitted details received by the Local Planning Authority on 20 February 2018 (including dwg. nos FP1385-002 PL1) as modified by other conditions of this consent.
Reason: In order to ensure compliance with the approved drawings.
3. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until details of secure cycle parking provision have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the cycle parking has been provided in accordance with the submitted details.
Reason: To provide adequate facilities for sustainable transport and to reduce reliance on the private car.

Local Government (Access to Information) 1985 (as amended),

Background papers used in compiling the report:

Files of planning applications available for inspection from the Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter. Telephone 01392 265223