



Report to West Area Planning Committee

Application Number:	20/08378/FUL
Proposal:	Demolition of existing outbuildings and erection of 3 x 1 bed flats served by new access, external works, bin and cycle stores
Site Location:	Land Between Chichester Close and High Wycombe Footpath 38 Chichester Close High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Applicant:	Wycombe Almshouses
Case Officer:	Sarah White
Ward(s) affected:	Totteridge And Bowerdean
Parish-Town Council:	High Wycombe Town Unparished
Date valid application received:	23rd December 2020
Statutory determination date:	17th February 2021
Recommendation	Refusal

1.0 Summary & Recommendation/ Reason for Planning Committee Consideration

- 1.1 The proposed development, by reason of its scale and design, would be considered to represent a dominant and incongruous addition, at odds with and detrimental to the character and appearance of both the existing buildings and those within the surrounding area.
- 1.2 Furthermore, the proposal would also be considered to have a dominant and overbearing impact upon the rear windows of Nos. 5 and 7 Chichester Close, to the detriment of the residential amenities of the occupiers of those properties.
- 1.3 The proposal is in conflict with the development plan and is therefore recommended for refusal.
- 1.4 Councillor Sarfaraz Khan Raja requested the application be considered by committee. Cllr Raja considers that the proposal would have a positive impact in terms of providing affordable housing in perpetuity, which he believes would outweigh any concerns.
- 1.5 In calling in the applications, and in response to the Officer's concerns raised with the agent, Councillor Raja stated:
 - The general character of the area is one of varied design and appearance.

- The proposal includes a good corner focal point, a positive design element, which would be a distinctive feature, not an obtrusive structure.
- The proposal would not be detrimental to the living conditions of the residents occupying flat 5 and 7 of the existing Almshouses.
- The council priorities of providing affordable housing should be considered to have great weight when weighing and balancing of issues and the minimal harm (if any) caused by the proposal.

1.6 Recommendation – refusal

2.0 Description of Proposed Development

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing outbuildings located between Nos. 3 and 4, and 5 and 6 Chichester Close and the erection 3 x 1 bed flats served by a new access, external works, and the provision of bin and cycle stores.
- 2.2 The proposal seeks permission for a three-storey building consisting of 3 x 1-bed flats, a communal stairway and a lift. Each flat contains 1 bedroom, a bathroom, and an open plan kitchen/dining/living space.
- 2.3 To the front of the building the proposal involves the creation of a new vehicular access and the provision of 4 parking spaces. Bin and cycle storage would be provided to the south of the site.
- 2.4 The application relates to the Wycombe Almshouses; a horseshoe shaped, two storey development of flats within an established residential area. The site is run by the Wycombe Almshouses Trust, a local charity providing independent living homes for over 50's in the district.
- 2.5 The site is bounded by Bowerdean Road to the west, Chichester Close to the north, the rear gardens of Nos. 22-28 Greaves Road to the east, and to the south by a public footpath leading from Bowerdean Road to the Greaves Road Service Road, connecting to Grove Gardens and the housing development at the rear of Terryfield Road. side of Bowerdean Road,
- 2.6 The application is accompanied by
- Drainage Statement
 - Ecology and Trees checklist
- 2.7 This application has been amended through the submission of amended drainage details. Drawing no. 1712 P1 was also amended to add floor resilience construction notes.

3.0 Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 No recent planning history of relevance for this site.
- 3.2 Immediate locality:

Reference	Development	Decision	Decision Date
20/08349/FUL	Demolition of existing shops and ancillary residential and erection of 3 x 2 and 4 x 1 bed flats with ground floor shop served by new access, bin store and cycle store.	Pending consideration	

4.0 Policy Considerations and Evaluation

Principle and Location of Development

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP1 (Sustainable Development), CP3 (Settlement Strategy), CP4 (Delivering Homes), DM33 (Managing Carbon Emissions, Transport and Energy Generation)

- 4.1 The site is located within the High Wycombe settlement boundary, a Tier 1 settlement. Given this policy context the proposed construction of 3 x 1-bd flats, is considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with the Development Framework and all other material planning considerations.

Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM22 (Housing Mix), DM24 (Affordable Housing), DM41 (Optional Technical Standards for Building Regulations Approval)

Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (POSPD)

- 4.2 The proposed development falls below the threshold for affordable housing in this location. It is, however, understood that the proposed units would be owned by the Wycombe Almshouses Trust, who provide a local charity providing independent living homes for over 50's in the district.

Transport matters and parking

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP7 (Delivering the infrastructure to support growth), DM33 (Managing Carbon Emissions, Transport and Energy Generation)

- 4.3 The application site is located within Residential Zone A. The agent has confirmed that the proposed new parking spaces would be unallocated.
- 4.4 The site currently has an under provision of off-street parking, however, on balance, the additional parking spaces proposed result in an improvement (1(no) parking space for every 2.2 residential units) compared to what is currently provided (1(no) parking space for every 2.4 residential units).
- 4.5 The new parking spaces would meet the required dimensions, and the level of hardstanding provided would allow for vehicles to park, turn and exit the site in a forward gear.
- 4.6 Sufficient visibility splays from the proposed access can be achieved within the publicly maintained highway and land owned by the applicant. Furthermore, the access is wide enough to allow for simultaneous two-way vehicular movements.
- 4.7 On the basis of the above, the proposal would not therefore be considered to have a detrimental impact upon the safety and convenience of users of the adjacent highway.

Raising the quality of place making and design

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP9 (Sense of place), DM34 (Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development), DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality)

- 4.8 Permission is sought for a form of infill development to an existing horseshoe shaped development of flats. The existing buildings are 2-storey buildings, predominantly finished in brick under a pitched tiled roofed, with areas of cladding to the rear which face inward toward the communal garden area.
- 4.9 The site is predominantly surrounded by two storey pitched roofed buildings. The proposal involves the construction of a three storey, flat roofed building, constructed in the location of the existing bin stores and the boiler room, which are to be relocated. The proposed

building consists of 3 x 1-bed flats, a communal staircase, communal lift, boiler room, and storage. Externally, the building would be finished using a mixture of brickwork, render, and cladding.

- 4.10 It is considered that the scale and bulk of the proposed building is excessive in comparison with its setting. The proposed 3-storey building would extend in excess of 2 metres above the ridge line of the adjacent dwellings and extended an additional 4 metres to the rear of Nos. 5 and 7 Chichester Close.
- 4.11 Whilst examples of cladding/render and more modern design may exist elsewhere within the local area, given the infill location of the proposed development, the scale design and appearance are considered to appear completely at odds with the character and appearance of the existing buildings. The development would therefore result in a dominant and incongruous addition which would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the wider street scene.

Amenity of existing and future residents

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality), DM40 (Internal space standards), DM20 (Matters to be determined in accordance with the NPPF)

Neighbouring Properties

- 4.12 The properties most likely to be affected are Nos. 5 and 7 Chichester Close which are located to the north of the existing boiler room and bin storage area. The proposed new building would extend approximately 4 metres beyond the rear wall of Nos. 5 and 7 Chichester Close, and be significantly higher than the existing storage structure.
- 4.13 As a result, the proposal would be considered to have a dominant and overbearing impact upon the rear windows of those neighbours, adversely affecting the level of light to and outlook from those windows, to the detriment of the residential amenities of those neighbours.

Future Occupiers

- 4.14 The proposed flats consist of 1-bedroom, a bathroom, and an open plan kitchen/dining/living area. Each unit would have access to private amenity space in the form of either a patio or a balcony.
- 4.15 The proposed layout would be considered to provide a sufficient level of light, outlook, and ventilation as well as privacy for each of the rooms.
- 4.16 It is believed that, as the units would be owned by the Wycombe Almshouses Trust that the occupiers of the new units would also have access to the communal amenity area serving the existing flats. Had the application been considered acceptable this could have been ensured by means of a condition.
- 4.17 Additional parking would be located on-site, although the spaces would not be specifically allocated to any individual units.
- 4.18 Communal bin and cycle storage would be located to the south of the site. Had the development been considered acceptable it would have been considered appropriate to impose a condition to ensure the timely construction of the replacement bin and cycle storage facilities.
- 4.19 Environmental Health have been consulted upon the application and have noted the potential for disturbance as a result of traffic noise from Bowerdean Road. Had the development otherwise been considered appropriate, it would have been considered

necessary to include a condition requiring the implementation of a noise insulation scheme prior to occupation.

- 4.20 On the basis of the above the proposal would be considered to provide a suitable standard of living environment for the future occupiers.

Environmental issues

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM20 (Matters to be determined in accordance with the NPPF), DM33 (Managing Carbon Emissions: Transport and Energy Generation)

- 4.21 With regards to air quality, Wycombe District Council declared new Air Quality Management Areas on 22.12.17 that cover the main arterial roads into High Wycombe town centre, Marlow and the M40.

- 4.22 The Council has a duty to ensure that nitrogen dioxide levels from road traffic within the AQMA are reduced to safer levels in line with the national air quality objectives. It is currently estimated that 144 excess deaths each year within Wycombe District area are caused by poor air quality, with the expectation that the majority of those deaths will be caused along the main arterial roads into High Wycombe and Marlow town centres.

- 4.23 With this in mind the Council now applies the following principle to all residential developments that are either within the AQMA, or where the majority of vehicle movements from the development will be by road through the AQMA; 1 electric vehicle charging unit shall be provided for each dedicated parking space and at least 1 charging point per 10 unallocated spaces. All other spaces should have appropriate cable provision to prepare for increased demand in future years.

- 4.24 Had the development otherwise been considered acceptable, it would have been considered appropriate to impose a condition requiring the electric vehicle charging points to be provided prior to occupation.

Flooding and drainage

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM39 (Managing Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems)

- 4.25 The LLFA initially registered a holding objection to the proposed development, requesting further information:

- Demonstration that a sequential approach has been taken to locating the proposed building
- Including a site plan showing the existing surface water flood risk to the site, alongside
- supporting commentary of the assessment of sequentially locating the proposed building.
- Confirmation of finished floor levels
- Details of proposed resilience and resistance measures

- 4.26 The applicant/agent subsequently submitted further information to address these concerns, which was found to be acceptable at this stage.

- 4.27 Had the development otherwise been considered acceptable, the LLFA is satisfied that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact with regards to ground or surface water flood risk, subject to the suggested pre-commencement condition.

Ecology

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM34 (Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development)

- 4.28 Policy DM34 requires all development to protect and enhance both biodiversity and green infrastructure features and networks both on and off site for the lifetime of the development. No assessment has been provided with this proposal so it falls to the Local Planning Authority to consider what would be proportionate for the development proposed.
- 4.29 In this case the proposed works would result in the loss of two areas of grass; one between the proposed building and Bowerdean Road, and one between the existing building and the vehicular access servings Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Uplands to the south of the site. According to the site plan the proposed parking spaces would be finished in Golpla Surface Treatment (a grass reinforcement system).
- 4.30 In this instance the impact upon biodiversity and green infrastructure would be considered relatively minimal. Given the constraints of the site, enhancement measure beyond the inclusion of perhaps a bird box, would not have been considered proportionate.

Historic environment (or Conservation Area or Listed Building Issues)

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP9 (Sense of place), CP11 (Historic Environment), DM20 (Matters to be determined in accordance with the NPPF), DM31 (Development Affecting the Historic Environment)

- 4.31 Concerns have been raised by the High Wycombe Society with regards to the relocation of a commemorative stone plaque. The site is not listed, nor is it located within a Conservation Area.
- 4.32 Had the development been considered acceptable, a condition may have been included regarding the removal and relocation of the commemorative stone plaque.

Building sustainability

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM41 (Optional Technical Standards for Building Regulations Approval)

- 4.33 Had the development otherwise been considered acceptable, it would have been considered necessary to condition water efficiency in accordance with Policy DM41.

5.0 Weighing and balancing of issues / Overall Assessment

- 5.1 This section brings together the assessment that has so far been set out in order to weigh and balance relevant planning considerations in order to reach a conclusion on the application.
- 5.2 In determining the planning application, 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. In addition, Section 143 of the Localism Act amends Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act relating to the determination of planning applications and states that in dealing with planning applications, the authority shall have regard to:
- a. Provision of the development plan insofar as they are material,
 - b. Any local finance considerations, so far as they are material to the application (such as CIL if applicable), and,
 - c. Any other material considerations
- 5.3 As set out above it is considered that the proposed development would not accord with the relevant development plan policies. Whilst it is understood that the proposal would provide 3 affordable homes, which is a material planning consideration, on balance, the

conflict with the development plan and the harm caused to the character and appearance of the area, and the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties, are considered to outweigh any potential benefits in terms of affordable housing provision.

6.0 Working with the applicant / agent

- 6.1 In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF (2019) the Council approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way taking a proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions and work proactively with applicants to secure developments.
- 6.2 The Council work with the applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.
- 6.3 In this instance the applicant/agent was provided with pre-application advice. The applicant's agent was advised how the proposal did not accord with the development plan, and that no material considerations were apparent to outweigh these matters. Comments were however received from the Local Member and the application was subsequently considered by the Planning Committee.

7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 The proposal is not in accordance with the development plan and is therefore recommended for refusal.

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposed development, by reason of its scale, bulk and design, would represent a dominant and incongruous addition, at odds with the scale, design and materials of the existing buildings. The building would appear unduly prominent and out of keeping with the character and appearance of the immediate locality. The proposal is therefore in conflict with policies DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality) of the Development Plan and the Council's adopted Residential Design Guidance (adopted July 2017).

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposed development, by reason of its scale and bulk, the proposal would be considered to have a dominant and overbearing impact upon the rear windows of Nos. 5 and 7 Chichester Close, to the detriment of the residential amenities of the occupiers of those properties.

The proposal is therefore in conflict with policies DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality) of the Development Plan and the Council's adopted Residential Design Guidance (adopted July 2017).

APPENDIX A: 20/08378/FUL

Consultation Responses and Representations

Councillor Comments

Councillor Sarfaraz Khan Raja

I would like to call-in this application to be determined by the Planning Committee if the officer is minded to refuse.

The proposal has a positive impact in terms of providing affordable housing in perpetuity, and this outweighs any small concerns (if any).

In response to the concerns that planning have raised that I have been made aware of -

The character and appearance of the surrounding area is extremely varied. New build flats in-between Victorian buildings, 70's low rise sheltered accommodation and Victorian terraces.

There is no general character except one of varied design and appearance to reflect the period in which the various properties in the local area were built.

Good corner focal point, a positive design element. And would be a distinctive feature, not an obtrusive structure.

The relationship with the existing flats is the same as already exists on site and is not detrimental to the living conditions of the Almshouses residents occupying flat 5 and 7. There are positive effects of the new building on flats 5 and 7.

The council priorities of providing affordable housing should be considered to have great weight when weighing and balancing of issues and the minimal harm (if any) caused by the proposal.

Parish/Town Council Comments

High Wycombe Town Centre Unparished – Totteridge and Bowerdean

Consultation Responses

Highways

Comments: The proposal would result in the loss of 2 existing parking spaces and the provision of 4 new parking spaces, with sufficient space to allow vehicles to park, turn and exit the site in a forward gear.

The proposed access is wide enough to allow for simultaneous two-way vehicular movements and the necessary visibility splays from the access can be achieved within the publicly maintained highway and land owned by the applicant.

No objection, subject to the suggested conditions.

Environmental Health

Identified Environmental Services issues relevant to Planning:

- Air Quality from additional vehicle movements effecting the health of local residents in the adjacent Air Quality Management Areas.
- Noise from Bowerdean Road affecting proposed development

No objection, subject to the suggested conditions.

Lead Local Flood Authority

Final comments: No objections, subject to conditions

Representations

High Wycombe Society

Comments: Whilst we are broadly supportive of the proposal I am concerned that there appears to be no Heritage statement on this application and yet my understanding is that the plan involves part demolition of a wall which currently has set into it an important seventeenth century stone which has been preserved against all odds to the current day. The stone, dated 1686, commemorates the building of almshouses and there is a related entry 6 years later in one of the town's ledger books. It also appears on one old photograph in the BFP archives in one of its prior locations in Easton Street. Committee minutes confirm that effort was expended to preserve it in the past when the almshouses in Easton Street were demolished.

There is also a twentieth century stone in the same wall giving important details of the relocation of some of the almshouses from one side of the road to the other in their more recent past. I understand that some thought has already been given to re-locating these stones and I am aware of a third stone commemorating the Newland almshouses in a nearby garden area not so directly affected by these plans. I am concerned that the seventeenth century stone in particular is given a sheltered position to preserve it as much as possible from any further weathering. Also if during its removal and relocation there is an opportunity to examine the back of the stone, there is a remote possibility that there could be more information of historical significance there to someone with a trained eye.

I note from the narrative in the application that the design is said to be a "good blend with the 1970s housing". The drawings look as if it is a more significant change in style than might be assumed by reading that sentence alone. It would not have been allowed in the 1970s when there was a huge debate about whether there should be any style variation between the apartments to which this development is attached and their immediate neighbours in Chichester close and across the road. But I recognise that such a "blend"/juxtaposition of styles may now be considered more acceptable.

Other Representations

One letter of representation has been received objecting to the proposal, summary of comments received:

- Scale and design out of keeping with the character of the immediate area,
- Potential loss of a non-designated heritage asset – commemorative stones

APPENDIX B: Site Location Plan

20/08378/FUL
Scale 1/1250



Planning Committee
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Ordnance Survey 100062456